カメンライダー ドラゴンナイト

2ワールド 1ハーツ

KAMEN RIDER DRAGON KNIGHT

2WORLD 1HEARTS

真野勝成
MANO KATSUNARI

イースト・プレス

Kamen Rider
Dragon Knight

Two Worlds
One Heart

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Dragon Knight

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One Heart

Katsunari Mano

East Press

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Table of contents

Special Chapter
1 Story of Kamen Rider Dragon Knight 1
2 Character chart 2
3 Drafts 3
4 Character introduction 4

Prologue 7

Chapter I
1 Trouble Begins 9
2 No Men's Decision 12
3 Power of Three 15

Chapter II
4 Steel and Crab 18
5 Doubtless Chameleon 20
6 Distorted Reflection 23

Chapter III
7 First Victim 27
8 Doubt and Confusion 29
9 Crueler Than Fate 31

Chapter IV
10 Brothers In Arms 35
11 Simple Battle 38
12 Venomous Deed 40
13 Burning Determination 43
14 Fang And Pride 45

Chapter V
15 For someone 48
16 Crimes Of Oversurvive 50
17 Nightmare 55

Epilogue 57

STORY

The parallel world called Ventara was invaded by General Xaviax, alien warlord commanding an army of mirror monsters. Twelve people transformed into Kamen Riders, superhuman fighters aided by the Advent Beasts and powered by the Advent Decks.
The power of another world.
Neverthless, Xaviax tricked Adam, original Kamen Rider Dragon Knight, taking advantage of his love for Sarah. The Riders were all vented, leaving Ventara helpless against another invansion.
Only one of them was left. Len, Kamen Rider Wing Knight, escaped to Earth, Xaviax' next target.
Dragon Knight deck was taken from Adam and ended up in hands of normal earth kid, Kit Taylor. Believing it to be a connection to his missing father, Kit made a contract with the dragon and was caught up in battle over the fate of Ventara and Earth.
Xaviax recruited other earth riders, mirror twins of the original riders, to fight Len as the only obstacle remaining in his way. They were all promised something by him. Some had a desire they couldn't achieve and some hit a dead end in life. This led them all into Xaviax' plans. In the end, inluding Kit.
It was battle for survival. Vent or be vented.
Kit and Len fought on, made friends and lost them again. Xaviax' plans continued to unravel, revealing the connections ensnaring everyone and everything. They were getting more and more desperate as he was running out of options.
Then...
Kit was vented in the fierce battle against the alliance of Wrath and Strike and Xaviax had taken his deck. Adam became his final triumph card once again.
Thanks to No Men, Len woke Eubulon from cold sleep and the hope has been restored. Chance and Price, two of the original riders were rescued from the Advent Void. Finally, Adam joined the riders in their decisive battle against Xaviax.
The war against Xaviax ended and Kit was offically appointed as Kamen Rider Dragon Knight in Adam's place, working hard with the others to defeat the remaining monsters left behind on Earth and Ventara.

KAMEN RIDER DRAGON KNIGHT CHARACTER CHART

EARTH | VENTARA | KARSH

ADAM
KAMEN RIDER DRAGON KNIGHT

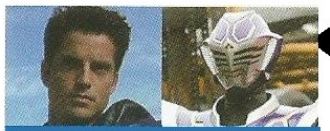
GENERAL XAVIAX

VIC FRASIER
KAMEN RIDER WRATH

GRANT STANLEY
KAMEN RIDER CAMO

CHRIS RAMIREZ
KAMEN RIDER STING

BRAD BARETT
KAMEN RIDER THRUST


JAMES "JTC" TRADEMORE
KAMEN RIDER STRIKE

DANNY CHO
KAMEN RIDER AXE

RICHIE PRESTON
KAMEN RIDER INCISOR

ALBERT CHO
KAMEN RIDER SPEAR

DREW LANSING
KAMEN RIDER TORQUE

MIRROR TWIN

ENEMIES

TEAMMATE

TEAMMATE

BETRAYL

MIRROR TWIN

FAMILY

CHANCE
KAMEN RIDER AXE

HUNT
KAMEN RIDER AXE

KIT TAYLOR
KAMEN RIDER DRAGON KNIGHT / ONYX

EUBULON
ADVENT MASTER

KASE
KAMEN RIDER SIREN

FRIEND

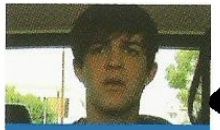
LEN
KAMEN RIDER WING KNIGHT

MAYA YOUNG

PRICE
KAMEN RIDER STRIKE

ALLIES

FRIEND


TRENT MOSELEY

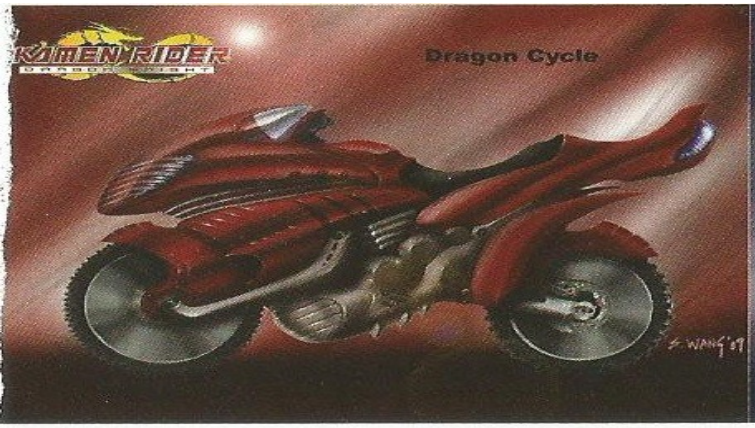
LACEY SHERIDAN

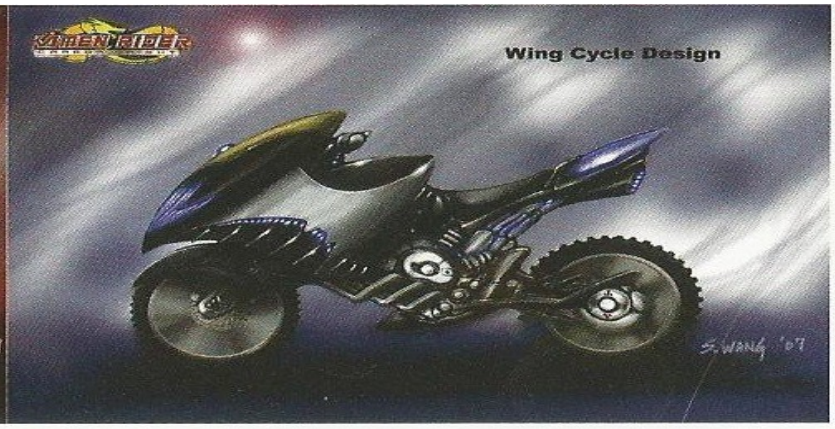
MICHELLE WALSH

AGENT PHILLIPS

GRACE'S BOOKS

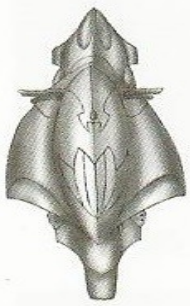
NO MEN





General Xaviax

Wing Cycle



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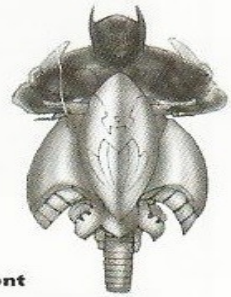


front

Characters

EARTH

Kit Taylor / Kamen Rider Dragon Knight II / Kamen Rider Onyx
A boy who, led by the visions from his missing father, accidentally became a rider and ended up on mission to protect Earth. He fought as Dragon Knight and Onyx and decided to stay with the original riders after Xaviax' defeat.

Chris Ramirez / Kamen Rider Sting
Fifth generation Marine discharged from military because of his worsening asthma. When he got a chance to join secret military branch fighting alien invasion, he took it up immediately. The irony was hidden to him for a while. He was not fighting against alien invasion, but for it. He joined Len and Kit after finding out the truth, but was vented protecting Len from Strike.

Maya Young
Investigative reporter researching urban legends for paranormal web, Way Above Top Secret. In the meantime, she works at the books store of her aunt Grace. She got involved after Len saved her from a mirror monster.

Trent Moseley
Maya's friend and colleague at Grace's Books. He started to help her investigation after getting to know about Kamen Riders. This made a secret governmental agency called No Men pick him up and give him two options – either go into prison for breaking into their systems or join them. He made his choices and became one of their agents.

Lacey Sheridan
Fashion is the trademark of Maya's other best friend. She protested against her involvement with riders as she worried that Maya is chasing after something imaginery. Then she got even more worried after seeing an enemy Kamen Rider transform right in front of her and this fear lead her right into Michelle's trap.

Michelle Walsh
She initially possed as a senior journalist of paranormal investigations website and Maya's superior, but is actually an agent of a secret government agency, No Men. She starts working with the riders once they both realize they have the same goals.

Agent Phillips
Michelle's boss and an agent of No Men working to stop the invasion of extraterrestrial life forms. He was the one who scouted Trent.

Richie Preston / Kamen Rider Incisor
A spoiled brat disowned by his rich father for exactly that – being a spoiled brat. Xaviax possed as family lawyer and promised him 1 million dollars for every rider he defeated. He challenged Len and was vented.

Drew Lansing / Kamen Rider Torque
A small time conman that accepted Xaviax' offer after his hustles got him in trouble with police. He was promised a world for using his people skills to control earth riders. Unfortunately, he had overrated his abilities and his plans blew up in his face.

Grant Stanley / Kamen Rider Camo
An underground fighter who was approached by Xaviax in the disguise of mercenary official. He fought for the promise of becoming the strongest fighter on two worlds.

Brad Barett / Kamen Rider Thrust
A former motocross racer who lost his career after being framed for fixing a match. Xaviax offered him the evidence needed to clear his name in exchange for fighting in a tournament called Battle Club. His famous win streak created his catchphrase - "Brad Barett always wins."

James Trademore / Kamen Rider Strike
A legendary hacker known as "JTC". His intelligent and gentle personality hides a cunning, brutal mind. He was Xaviax' loyal right hand man and the only one, who knew the whole truth.

Danny Cho / Kamen Rider Axe Albert Cho / Kamen Rider Spear
Brothers living on the streets. Xaviax promised them money and fame for taking part in the biggest heist in history – stealing a planet.

Vic Fraser / Kamen Rider Wrath
He was in coma after an incident, so Xaviax controlled his body as a puppet. It was for the purpose of joining the fight personally and to taunt Len as Nolan, Vic's mirror twin, was his teacher.

Frank Taylor
Kit's father, who had disappeared year before the start of the story, leading to Kit being placed in foster care. Without him keeping Kit out of trouble and with some outside influence, things started to pile up soon.

Grace Kiefer
Maya's aunt and the owner of Grace's books. She is a bit of an airhead, but cares about Maya greatly.

VENTARA

Len / Kamen Rider Wing Knight
A survivor of the original riders. He started out as a cold, solitary fighter after losing his family and world because of his best friend. He warmed up to Kit as time passed.

Kase / Kamen Rider Siren
Another survivor of the original riders and Len's lover. Only woman among the Riders and one of their best fighters.

Adam / Kamen Rider Dragon Knight I
He used to be ventaran Dragon Knight, but became tired of fighting and wanted to have a normal life with his girlfriend, Sarah. Xaviax took advantage of it and tricked Adam into betraying ventaran riders. He gave Adam another life with her in illusion of Ventara, but only until he needed him as the last triumph card. Kit replaced him as Dragon Knight, allowing Adam to go live with Sarah.

Price / Kamen Rider Strike
He shares the face and charm with JTC, but lacks his cruel and manipulative nature. After Xaviax was defeated, he and Maya started a relationship that crosses the world border.

Nolan / Kamen Rider Wrath

The second-in-command of Ventaran riders and Len's teacher.

Sarah
A normal girl from Ventara that Adam fell in love with. Xaviax placed her into illusory world, the Third reality, where Adam could be with her as a reward for his betrayl.

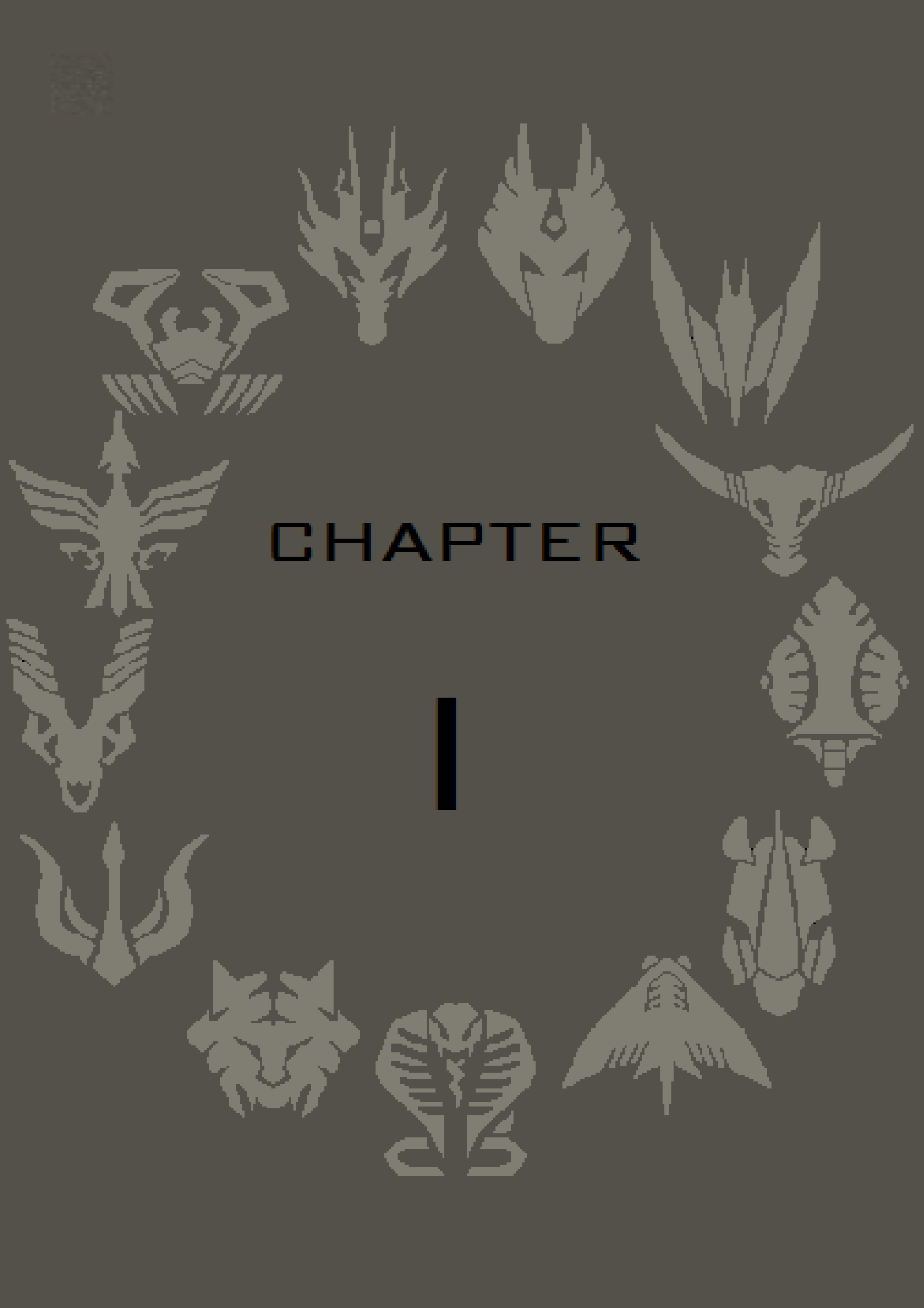
KARSH

General Xaviax
Karshan warlord who invaded Ventara and later Earth. Here, he took the form of middle aged man, mostly wearing a bussines suit. He enslaved population of conquered planets in order to rebuild his homeworld. The earth riders were manipulated to fight for him without knowing anything. He was quite capable fighter himself, able to go against all riders at once, but chose not to until forced by desperate situation. His many plans spread through all events, but that didn't stop them from failing.

Eubulon, Advent Master
Karshan scientist sent to Ventara to prepare grounds for invansion. He had a change of heart here and helped Ventarans face the invansion by developing the rider technology. He lost in a fight with Xaviax and landed on Earth instead in the Advent Void. No Men found him, but couldn't wake him from the coma caused by his injuries so they put him in cryochamber until they find the means needed. When that happened, he organized the final stand against the Xaviax.

PROLOGUE

„Is it really ok, Kit?“ „Trust me, I want to be at the celebration as much as you do, but there are barely any monsters left by now. You can go and get some rest. I'll take break next time.“
Kit Taylor stood up, took a bag from the table and pressed it against Len's chest. That all too familiar scowl didn't bother him by now. „Alright.“ Len smiled bitterly. Someone had to be on duty even when everyone else celebrated. A year has passed since the organized attacks ended and they managed to nearly exterminate remaining monster on both worlds.
„Frank Taylor has raised a fine man. I'll be honored to meet him.“ „Please give regards to my father, Master Eubulon.“ „Is it really safe for you to go alone?“
A beautiful blonde standing beside Len threw Kit a funny look.
“Kase, I got better. You don't have to worry about me anymore.“
„I am just worried that it will come back to bite you once.“ Kase chuckled at Kit's fake indignation. „We've been dating for so long and I still don't know how can you make me laugh.“ Kase gave Len a quick peck on the cheek, eyes shining with mirth. „Sorry, Kit.“ Len muttered. „It's fine.“ „Len, it's almost time.“ Kase took Len's hand and they turned towards the mirror. „Well... come back soon and don't forget about presents.“ Kit chuckled and waved his teammates off. „Riiight. Say hello to Adam for me, will you?“ „Yeah.“
The two disappeared into the mirror.
No one knew how long farewell that would be.



CHAPTER

I

„You say you can't contact Ventara?!“ „Correct. We are searching for the cause now.“ Despite the effort that Michelle Walsh made to remain formal, her voice was still as strained as when she answered Kit's emergency call and the way she shoved past the rush of agents filling No Men's HQ was worthy of Nobel Prize.
„Trent, explain the situation.“ Trent hit the keyboard, eyebrows furrowed in concentration all the while. „I've tried to set up a communication channel with Ventara, but so far, no response.“ He turned the computer screen to Kit.
It read **LOST**.
„Kit, try it yourself.“
He nodded and entered mirror with his deck in hand. But...
„No!“
He came out right away. „I can go in and out on Earth, but I can't reach Ventara.“
„It seems to be systematically blocked from our side in a way similar to how Xaviax was shielding his base.“
„Do you know how is this possible?“ Michelle shrugged reluctantly. „Maybe something happened in Ventara?“ „Our systems had not recorded any other changes.“ „And that means?“ Kit was snapped out of shock by metallic ringing sound. No Men's alerts went off a second later. Michelle sighed. „Not now. Take care of it and return as quickly as possible.“
„Got it.“ Kit turned to mirror again.
„It's the alley near the intersection of Town Avenue and East Seventh Street.“
„I am not a taxi driver! I go by sounds, not street names!“

✽ ✽ ✽

He jumped out of the reflective surface, a trashed car, to the back alley it was thrown away at. In front of him were three monstrous geckos surrounding a group of cleaning workers. „Stop!“ Kit kicked the monsters away, allowing the workers to escape. He extended his left hand with the deck. A red lighting materialized the belt around his waist. „Kamen Rider!“
With these words, he inserted the deck into the belt. His body was engulfed in sphere of light and he transformed into Kamen Rider Dragon Knight.
He removed a card from the deck and inserted it into a dragon head shaped machine on his left forearm. SWORD VENT
A robotic voice echoed, summoning Drag Saber to Dragon Knight's right hand. A Minion attacked Dragon Knight with huge shuriken taken off its back. The other three monsters also spotted him, attacked and were met with a whirl of slashes. The monsters broke through a nearby wall and backed away into a warehouse.
„Wait!“ Dragon Knight chased after them. „You're not going anywhere!“
Another card went into the visor. ATTACK VENT
Red metallic dragon appeared, spitting flames at the monsters. FINAL VENT
The dragon and its rider perfomed a flying kick. A deafening explosion burnt the monsters so that not even ashes remained.
„Well, here we go.“

✽ ✽ ✽

Kit returned to the No Men's base, still as busy a place as before.
„We still don't know what happened. Maybe..“ Where did that voice come from?
„Kit! Where were you?“ „Len?! How did you...“ „I went to pick something up and now I can't go back.“
„Yeah, likely story.“ Michelle stared Len down, an impressive feat to do while looking up. „Any news from

Ventara's government?“ Len looked away for a moment. „No. Should there be any?“ „Explain, then.“
„I have no idea. I just- uh?” The alarm sound was closely followed by No Men's alert systems going off.
„I'll go. All just for some pizza...” Kit shook his head with a chuckle. „I'll go too.” They headed for the mirror, but Michelle wasn't done yet.
„There is someone I'd like to introduce to you, so come back as soon as possible. Also, try to minimize the damage by accessing Third reality.“
Kit and Len thrust the decks towards the mirror. Energy crackled, creating the belts. They set their decks in and called out 'Kamen Rider!', transforming into Dragon Knight and Wing Knight.
As soon as they jumped into the mirror, HQ's door opened and a man in bussines suit walked in.
„I am sorry for the delay.“ „It's good to see you anyway.“ No Men's leader, Agent Philips, stood up and greeted the man.

❃ ❃ ❃

Dragon Knight and Wing Knight came out of the mirror in a street of skyscrapers.
„Where...?“ Monster popped out from behind, a Sheerghost. „This'll be easy!“
„Wait, it can't be just this one... Over here!“
Group of Sheerghosts appeared from the windows above them. Wing Knight slotted a card into the Dark Visor hanging on his belt. **Nasty Vent**
His Advent Beast, Black Wing, dove from the sky, letting out an ear piercing shreek. When Kit looked up again after the sound attack passed, the sight was not any better.
„Geez...“
It only drew in more monsters. The alley swarmed with them. They shrieked and chirped a war cry as they've dropped on the ground. „There are too many!“ Two monsters were split by Drag Saber and Dark Visor mid-fall and disappeared into dust.
„Kit! It's getting away!“
„Got it!“ Dragon Knight tackled the surviving monster and dragged it into the shine of a windowpane.
They fell out on the other side and found themselves on a high roof, overlooking the city. It could be only described as general sort of city, a combination of different bits and pieces that barely fit together. The illusion Xaviax gave Adam for betraying original riders, Third reality. Adam lived there with his love, Sarah until Xaviax pulled him out in the finale of Earth's conquest.
The Sheerghost cried out and collapsed on the ground. Its skin split open and a blue body forced its way out.
„Oh man...“
The Sheerghost became a Raydragoon, a monstrous fly covered in blades. It took off immediately, buzzing tauntingly all the while. „Yeah, so much better...“ Raydragoon descended to attack Dragon Knight again and again, but always kept out of the sword's reach.
„C'mon... Not funny!“ Dragon Knight yelled after the monster before inserting a new card in his visor. **Strike Vent**
A weapon shaped like Dragredder's head appeared on Dragon Knight's hand. He aimed for the monster in the sky. The Raydragoon avoided a fireball after fireball.
Suddenly, another flying monster collided with it mid-air before a black bullet shot it down from the sky. Wing Knight's Final Vent – single shot and the Raydragoon turned into dust.
„That was a good one, Kit.“ „You're late, Len.“ Contrary to his words, Kit was happy to see his brother-in-arms. „Yeah, sorry for that.“
With these words, they passed through the mirror and returned to No Men's base. „Any news about Ventara?“ „Nothing yet. By the way...“
An unknown man stood up behind Trent. His face was old, but his eyes were sharp and he moved with an air of natural authority.
„Wait, who are you?“ „Colonel David Stuart.“ Agent Phillips introduced the man. „He is from the US

Army.“ „Nice to meet you, Mr. Dragon Knight and Mr. Wing Night. It is an honor.“ Colonel Stuart saluted. „Well, ... thanks...“ Kit awkwardly saluted back. „Master Eubulon greeted me the other day. It's hard to see him and most of the Riders missing. I was called here to do my best to help.“ „Colonel Stuart is an executive of technical and tactical exchange and study in department of weapons.“ „Wait a moment! They want to apply Rider technology to weapons?“ Agent Phillips joined Michelle in the art of tired scowls. „Kit, this is a general collaboration with the government.“ „Please do not worry, Mr. Dragon Knight.“ Colonel Stuart thought over the words of Agent Philips.
„I have moved to the weapon department only recently. My reason to be here is providing No Men and other young soldiers of the Kamen Rider army with spirit, skills and tactics of professional soldier.“
„Yeah, I wish .... “
That was apparently the reason why Master Eubulon accepted him. He felt common ties with another soldier forged in fire. „Well, if Master Eubulon thought it's okay, then I guess it is.“ Len tried to reassure his friend.
Kit nodded and held his hand out for Colonel Stuart to take.

Kit was pacing back and forth in front of *Grace's Books*.
„I should...“ He walked to the motorcycle, but then returned back. He knew it. He wasn't able to enter the store after all. If he could, he wouldn't be stuck pacing around for twenty minutes already.
Kit glanced through the glass, watching Maya busy herself with work. She seemed calm, but he could see her eyes are red and her face is stained with tears she was wiping away occasionally.
It was ironic that after JTC used her and broke her heart, it was his mirror twin who helped her get over it. Maya and Price build a good relationship through the year of peace.
And now it was impossible to get in touch with him. Kit understood how she has to feel. His father was also out of reach ... again.
He should be there for her. He should go into the store and reassure her, but he couldn't find the words needed. So came the back and forth cirle in front of the place.
„Can't be helped.“ Kit looked at the door again. „Alright. Here we go.“ As soon as he stepped forward, he collided with someone and bounced away from the door. Looking up, he saw dog and cat costumed characters. „Hey there ... What's up?“ the dog costume asked. He noticed Kit's sour face and tried to offer him a balloon. „I don't want it.“ Kit shook his head. „Kit?“ „Oh. Hi, Maya.“ He jumped up and greeted her, but kept his eyes down to avoid looking her in the face. „Are you okay?“ „Yeah... What's this? The new specialty of Grace's Books?“ Kit nodded to the two mascots, who were expressing love to each other as openly and loudly as two people in huge cartoonish costumes can. „Aunt Grace hired them to promote the renovation anniversary sale.“ „Well, pets are okay, but maybe you should change supplier.“ Maya chuckled.
„Yeah...“ An awkward moment passed.
„About Price... Well...“ Maya watched Kit as he was searching for words. „I am fine. Thanks anyway.“ She smiled, but her eyes were raw with sadness. „It doesn't matter I can't go to Ventara, I know Price is alive and you'll meet him again.“
„I know.“
„Well, umh...“
„I can feel it, but he is still somewhere I can't reach him and... that hurts.“
„Maya...“
Silence fell again. Maya pretended to smile as best as she could and looked up at Kit again.
„I am sorry for getting you down. I know you're worried about your father.“ „No, it was me who made you feel bad. I am sorry.“ Maya turned to the bookstore for a moment. „I've... got to go. Grace needs me.“
„OK, then.“ Kit watched Maya retreat back to the store. Someone slapped his shoulder from behind.
„That's what I call a bad timing.“
„Lacey...“ Maya's friend stood... little too close for comfort. Kit backed away silently.
„I couldn't cheer her up even if she allowed me to talk to her. Still not in touch with Ventara?“ „Nope. Trent is still working on it.“ „That's bad, I guess. Oh, I remember dating Trent. Been a long time ago.“ Kit barely looked at her. That sounded exactly like Lacey. Trailing off to fashion or dating at moment's notice.
„Do you go out again?“ Lacey smiled. „There are many possibilities. I'll try to talk to Maya for a moment.“
„Take care.“
Kit ran away, got on his motorcycle and rode off.

✽ ✽ ✽

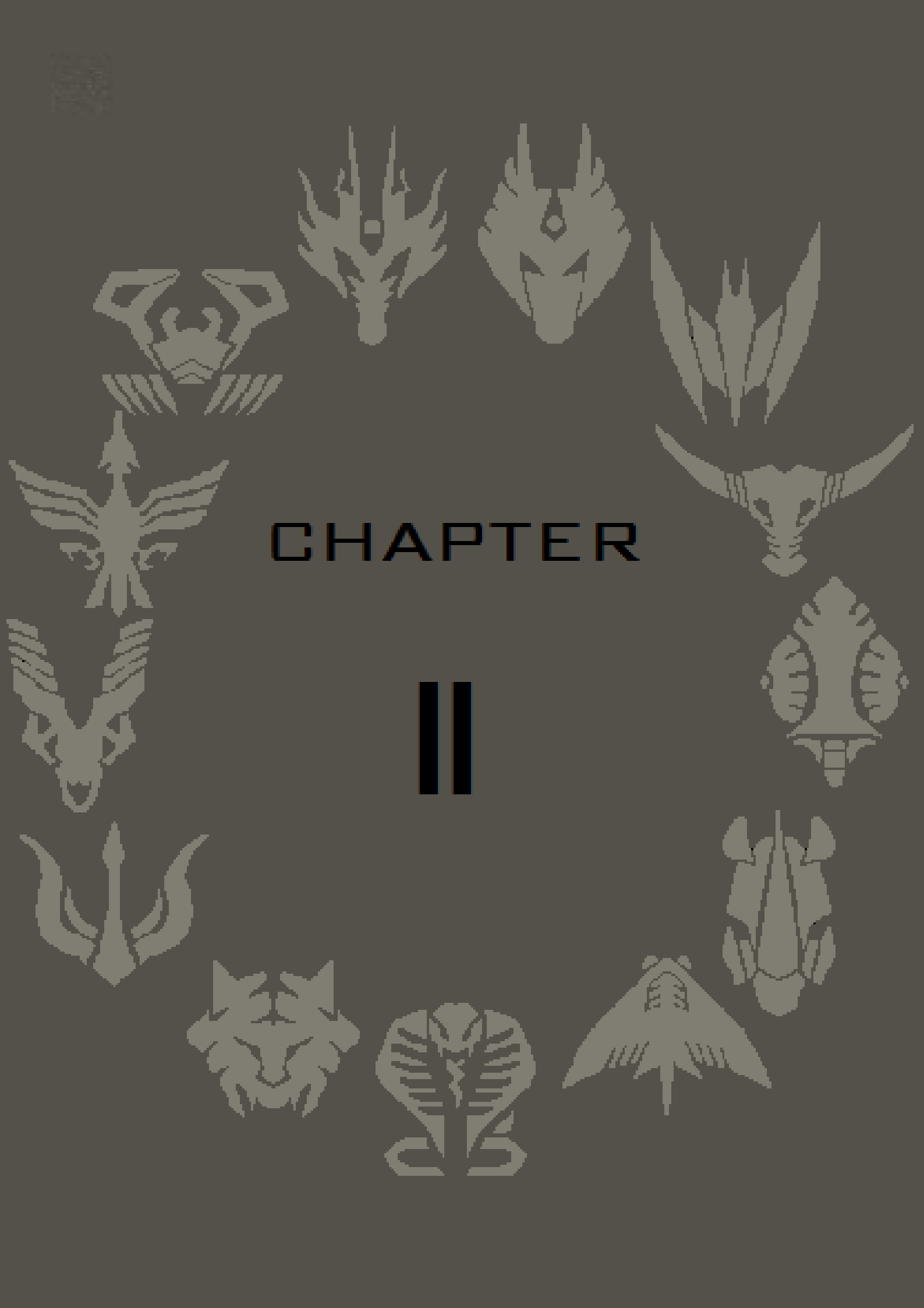
„How are you feeling today, old man?“ Kit joked to Len after landing yet another Dragon rider kick and stumbling at his feet a bit, breathing heavily. „Alright. What about you?“ „I'm done already and there is still no end to these guys.“ Their chitchat helped to distract from the exhaustion and desperation. Listening to Len's voice was reassuring for Kit as they fought in the backyard of an unnamed school in Third reality. The

attacks were growing in frequency all time. By now they faced all kinds of mirror monsters multiple times every day.
„What on Earth are we supposed to do?“
„Perhaps they have a nest somewhere. We should find and destroy it.“
„Any better ideas?“
Their communicators rang. „You ok there?“ „It better be the end of bussiness for today.“
Michelle's sigh carried through the line. „Kit, I understand how you feel, but please don't do anything stupid.“ „It gets worse only when I listen to you.“ Imagining her scowling face made him feel a bit better.
„I don't have any new information, but I need to talk to you about something...“
„Got it.“
„Let's go.“
Kit took Len's hand to help himself stand up and they went through the mirror.
„So, what is it?“
He wished he had not asked.
She showed them pictures. Many pictures. Reflections of dismembered corpses and torn body parts.
„Results of analysis state that these are the victims who were deemed lost to the monsters. The wounds were caused by biting or tearing.“ „How can the monsters be hunting people?“ „Does it have anything to do with the increasing frequency of attacks?“ „We don't know yet, but it may be possible. Monsters had to find an alternative food source once their previous 'master' couldn't feed them any more.“
Now it was obvious.
Earth became an all-you-can-eat buffet for them.
„Those bastards!“
Michelle slammed her hands on the desk. The plan she was about to present was a dangerous one and she saw two people against it standing right here before her. „As Len said, they probably created a nest somewhere, so even if we destroy those that appear on Earth, we don't accomplish anything.“
„And you two are at your limit already.“ Agent Phillips stroke his beard covered chin. He hadn't been able to rest for a long time. Michelle gathered her remaining strength.
„After thorough consideration of the events, No Men made a decision. We will gather people capable of using the Advent Decks.“ Len frowned.
„What's that supposed to solve? Ventaran riders have the decks.“
„No.“
Colonel Stuart layed a suitcase on the table and opened it with a gentle movement of his hands.
Eleven decks appeared – all but those of Wing Knight and Dragon Knight.
„How did you...?! The Riders don't ever let go of them.“
Stuart looked up in Len's disbelieving face.
„They set them aside before the ceremony. I wanted to take a look, so I asked for permission from Master Eubulon. We talked a long time about the hardships and challenges of warrior's life. He trusted me to look after the decks.“ „That doesn't answer how you got them.“
Kit supressed the need to take cover even though the implied threat was not meant for him. Colonel Stuart just waltzed through without a second thought. „It is possible to bring back the earth riders you fought year ago, am I right?“ Kit shrugged. „Maybe. Their memories were erased so they could return to their normal lives.“ „Master Eubulon told us that their memory returns if they get the decks back.“ Trent added. „I disagree. Tell you what, many of them have some serious problems we can't deal with. Those, who can be trusted now live the lives they deserve. It would be unfair to drag them back onto the battlefield.“
Len understood Kit's thoughts, but still had to point out how reality works.
„This is a threat to the society they live in. They will lose their happiness and then their lives.“ Kit stared down at his feet. „I'll take it as a silent agreement.“ Michelle changed the tone of conversation. „ It'll be your pick. Please start working on it immediately.“ „Kit, their current whereabouts are here.“ Trent passed him the files. „I wonder... It won't be JTC, will he?“ „Don't worry, Trent. I'm never going to invite him to the party.“

Trent sighed. „I wish it would be a good choice, but Maya...“ „I know.“
„Anyway, let's start with someone actually trustworthy.“ Len flicked through the files for a while. „Chris... Well, I don't feel like bringing him in either, but we don't have any other choice.“ Len picked up Advent Deck of Kamen Rider Sting and entered a mirror. Kit emptied the water bottle he was holding and went after him.

„Hi, Chris.“
Said man stood on the sandy beach not far from the San Diego Marine base. „You people contacted me... Do you know what happened to me year ago? My asthma was suddenly gone and noone knows how.“
This was Chris' reward from Master Eubulon for fighting against Xaviax. He joined Len and Kit after finding out about the true events, but his ilness endangered him and he was vented not so long afterwards. „To be accurate, the actions speak louder than words.“ Kit pulled the magenta deck out of his pocket. „You'll understand everything if you take this.“ „How is that even supposed to work?“ Taken aback by the unexpected show of hesitation, Kit tried to withdraw the deck, but Chris caught his wrist. „Wait! Please, I need to know what happened.“
Finally, he took the deck.
Moment later, he inhaled sharply as a brutal headache and a wave of dizziness hit him. Chris fell to his knees, arms wrapped around his head. Kit crouched down to him.
„Chris! What's going on?!“
„Uh... Kit?“ Their eyes met and Chris straightened as if jolted awake.
„Kit! Len!“
„You remember!“
„It's been a while.“
The Knights patted Chris on shoulders, happy in their reunion. „That means you've defeated Xaviax!“ „Yeah... Long story short, you were taken from Advent Void by Master Eubulon. He cured your asthma so you could return to your life.“ „I guess I should thank him, then.“ „Well...“ Chris frowned slightly. „What's the matter, Kit?“ Seeing his teammate's face, Len took the word.
„We need you to return. All the other riders are trapped on Ventara and we face a rapid wave of monster attacks.“ Kit sighed. „Sorry to bother you. I know you are happy now, but we can't do this on our own.“
Neither the bright beach or the sound of the waves crashing in the background could stop the air between them from getting uncomfortably heavy. Chris looked at the deck before slowly extending his hand back to Kit. „Sorry, I can't do this.“ „But Chris..!“ „I was assigned to the base and I can't just leave my duty behind.“ „I get that, but this is emergency. Future of the world is at stake.“ „I know, I know, but I … just don't want to fight monsters anymore.“ The last light of the sunset emphasized how short on time they were and yet, they stood still as if chained to the spot.
Suddenly, a voice came from behind Chris.
„I understand your doubt, Private Ramirez or rather, Mr. Sting.“
They turned around and saw...
„You!“
Colonel Stuart was standing there for who knows how long.
„I am sorry, Colonel. The persuasion has failed.“ Len said. Kit had only a moment to ponder over that odd choice of words before Chris got his attention again. „You two... know him?“ he asked. Kit nodded. „Army sent him to work with No Men and us. What? Is he famous?“ Chris grabbed Kit's shoulder and shook him. „Oww! You crazy?!“ „Of course I do! Second Afghanistan Army hero who has been fighting in the Middle East since the start. There is no other soldier I respect more!“ Chris let go of Kit's shoulder and saluted Colonel, who answered with relaxed smile and salute of his own. „It's honor for you to say so. My achievements are insignificant against yours, Mr. Sting, Wing Knight and Dragon Knight. You have difficult mission of fighting the invanders, enemy nations and terrorists. I am very impressed.“
„Colonel...“
„Mr. Sting, I am proud to say that Sergeant Daniel Ramirez is a great soldier and a true marine.“
„You know my father?“
„Of course. The Ramirez family is important part of the US Army. Generations of heroes serving their

country. We need your strength. In this country, no, *in this world*, there is something only you can do. Will you work with me?“ Chris responded by standing up rigorously and saluting. „So, Private Ramirez, come soon.“ Colonel Stuart smiled, saluted them and left.
Chris stared at his back, eyes full of worship. „You can't refuse when he asks? Even if he asks for so much?“ „It's no use. He is my hero. His word is decisive.“ The happy expression on his face wavered, turning more thoughtful by the second.
„It wasn't right that I tried to turn you away. It's just... I was glad to be back in the army.“ Chris opened his backpack and took out three sticks.
„I kept them.“ He handed one to Kit and one to Len, who held the stick with a puzzled expression. „What is this?“ They starred at him. „Did you forget? That's what you used to teach us that together we are stronger than each of us alone.“ Older rider's face lit up with recognition. „Yeah. Sorry.“
„I kept them even when I couldn't remember what they were supposed to mean.“ He sighed heavily before continuing. „Originally, I entered the corps only to meet my father's expectations.“
„Chris...“
„I was depressed when it turned out to be impossible, so it wasn't hard to jump at another possibility without thinking there might be something behind it. Even though it was my dream, it was wrong even before Xaviax corrupted it. I did it only for my own satisfaction, to make my father proud. You and Maya helped me open my eyes. The time we fought together was important for me even when I couldn't remember it.“ Kit sighed. „But is it really ok for you to come back?“ „It's time to return the favor.“ Len offered his hand. „Let's fight again, for the sake of the world.“ They sealed the decision with a handshake.



CHAPTER

II

„I refuse.“ Brad Barett threw the deck back to Kit. „Why?“
The garage was dim, allowing the single window to illuminate Brad's face sharply. „I am still trying to get my reputation back. I don't have time for this.“
The motocross racer lost his reputation and career after false accusation of cheating in a race. He was offered the evidence needed to prove his innocence in exchange for fighting as Kamen Rider Thrust. However, he became an obstacle in Xaviax' plan, leading to the fight where JTC vented him. After Ventaran riders defeated Xaviax, Brad was pulled out of Advent Void and returned to his previous life.
He got his memories back just now after being handed the deck. „Please. We really need all the help we can get.“ Brad shook his head. „That doesn't concern me.“ „The world is at stake.“ „There are other riders. I live only for myself.“ „I know, but...“ Brad briefly made an odd face somewhere between annoyment and guilt. „It doesn't mean I wouldn't want to help, but my reputation is still tanked and I couldn't return to my original team. I ended up as a spare racer of a weak team. Moreover, I still don't have a contract for next season. I can't be a Kamen Rider.“ „When the season ends?“ „In six months....“
Brad flashed that face again. „Don't take it too hard.“ Kit sighed. They walked out of the garage.
„Consider it again.“
„Leave.“
„At least keep the deck in case a monster shows up somewhere nearby.“
It probably sounded too desperate because Brad shoved Kit out of the front and hit the button to close the shutters.
„Go away.“
Thrust deck slid in through the gap under the shutters before they rolled down completely. „What a stupid thing to do.“ Brad glanced down on the deck as it layed on the concrete. He begrudingly picked it up and threw it on the table at the opposite end of the garage, so that none else would get in trouble by finding it, Then it was time to blast some music and go back to the motorcycle work.

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Kit met Len and Agent Phillips in an underground parking lot.
„Did Brad decline?“ „Well...“ They the didn't need to hear anything else anyway.
Engines and parking attendants' voices echoed through the place.
A familiar figure approached.
Kit's face fell.
„Richie Preston...“ The man frowned. „Do I know you?“ He overlooked the three of them again. „If you are not guests or customers, you can either leave on your own or you can be thrown out.“ he said in a matter-of-way fact. Agent Philips shook his head. „No time for that.“ Richie found himself with Incisor deck pressed into his hand.
In a moment...
„Ouch ...!“ Like Chris and Brad before him, he clutched his head and fell to his knees in pain.
„What's wrong, Richie?“ Another parking attendant turned up. „What did you do to him?“ He ran up to the younger man and stood between him and the intruders. „Do you remember, Richie?“ Agent Phillips asked directly, disregarding the man. Richie exhaled roughly and looked up to his colleague.
„I'll take a break for a moment. I need to talk to them.“ The older man shot him another worried look, but a sharp glance shooed him away. Richie stood up, facing the three. „I am supposed to be dead, am I not?“ He glared at Len. „I lost.“
„You did and were vented – trapped in the Advent Void. It was close. A man possing as your father's lawyer handed you the deck, right? That was a lie. Xaviax tricked you.“ Agent Phillips explained.

„Xav ... Who?“
„An alien who tried to conquer the world. He used you for his plans.“
„Oh crap.“ A thorough facepalm followed.
„Well, thanks for getting me out... I guess?“
„It's ok... probably.“
„What's going on now?“ Len took word. „There are only three riders against too many monsters. We need you.“ Richie took a moment to think about it before looking at Agent Phillips, seemingly noticing him only now. „You are a new face.“ „I am Agent Phillips, investigator of the government agency called No Men. We work with the riders to protect the worlds.“
„Well, I understand now, but I still decline.“
He handed the deck back. Phillips didn't take it, removed his sunglasses and looked Richie in the eye. „I can't offer you as much as Xaviax, but I could still arrange for a reward.“ Richie shook his head. „I promised myself I won't live like that anymore. When I came home, it... wasn't my home anymore.“ „Xaviax was not lying about that...“ Kit muttered. „I relied on my friends, but they all disappeared in a moment. All I got was this job.“
Richie craned his neck to look behind them. His colleague was peeking from behind a pillar.
„I am all right.“ Richie called out to him before returning to the conversation at hand.
„The workers here are good people. They don't care about my past or stupid money games.“ His face lit up with a small smile, looking softer and warmer for the moment. „The students who earn their own tuition, the Puerto Rican who sends money to his family back home, everyone else who has to work hard to make living for themselves. They're not rich, but they don't mind. It's enough to live on.“
Kit gave him such a look that Len had to supress a chuckle.
„Are you really that guy who would kill someone for million bucks?“ He remembered those words thrown at him back then quite clearly and yet, this was not the person who said them.
„Truth to be said, I just didn't want to be alone. I went around picking up "cool guys", but they were only wasting money. I finally found my place here.“
„Monsters can find you even in this burrow.“ Len's words provoked thoughts that Richie obviously didn't want to have. „Then it will be your turn, Superman. As my body disintegrated, I regreted ever taking Conner's offer.“ He stopped to think before speaking again in much calmer tone. „I am sorry for risking lives to make money.“
Agent Phillips shook his head. „We'll leave, but this is not the last time. Keep the deck and think about it.“
„The answer will not change no matter how many time you come.“ Richie aswered, starring at the deck in his hands.
„Well, there goes our chance.“ Kit shrugged. „Len, can you ask Grant?“ „Yeah, I'll try. But what are you going to do?“ Kit muttered something with unreadable expression before repeating himself more clearly.
„I'll meet Drew.“

DOUBTLESS CHAMELEON

Two men stood in the spotlight of a fighting ring. The packed hall cheered and screamed for their every movement. The man in blue opened with a low tackle. Green man dodged and at that moment, man in blue threw a Russian hook.
Red open finger glove landed on the green man's temple. He folded onto his knees, fell forward and hit the floor. A referee ran over to the fallen fighter and crossed his hands overhead. Gong echoed, signaling the winner. „Round 2, seven seconds, Grant Staley wins with a KO!“ The spectators watched at the edge of their seats. Grant Staley stood with his arms spread wide, letting the cheer hit him like a tsunami.
That's it. That's what I want. Give me your respect!

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He walked down the corridor humming a melody in tune with the echoes of his fame. Opening the door to a dark locker room, he paused for a moment. Something bad hung in the air.
Finally, he spotted a man in black sitting on a chair close to the wall. The man stood up and clapped. „Nice fight, future champ.“ „Who are you?“ „It was a good game. Solid action.“
Other players and staff members passed the door.
„This area is forbidden to outsiders. How did you get there?! Get out!“
Len avoided Grant's punch and took a fighting stance. He blocked a kick and answered with his own. Grant spat a profanity before reaffirming his posture and punching. Len avoided the punch, altough it still scratched his face.
With his back to the wall, Len tackled Grant and struck out with his knee. Grant broke free just in time to avoid being hit and stepped away quickly.
„That was good. I want you to come back, Grant Staley.“ Len rubbed the scratch on his face. „What do you mean?“ „If you take this, you'll know what happened a year ago.“ He took Camo deck out his pocket and offered it to Grant. „I defeated my teacher in the dojo, then ...“ The MMA fighter's face frowned in deep thought. „I don't remember ... When I came to, I was standing on a street and lot of time passed. What do you know?“ „You can't go back once you pick it up.“ Grant rolled his eyes. „Bro, I don't fear anything.“ He took the deck without another thought.
Pain hit him worse than any punch he ever received. He fell to the floor, body twisted in agony. When the pressure of his memories returning gave out, he opened his eyes wearily and looked at Len. „That was harsh... Oh, are you a Kamen Rider too?“
„Yes. My name is Len.“
„Were you also invited Major Mattock?“
„That man fooled you to fight on his side as he was invading Earth.“
„What? It was a battle to decide the strongest of the two worlds.“
„That's a lie.“
„You serious?“
Grant looked up to the ceiling. „Damn, I want to punch that bastard so hard...“ „Too late. He is gone already. Grant, we need you to fight again as Kamen Rider Camo.“ The other man shook his head furiously. „Are you insane?! I just got a brilliant career. You probably saw the match before. Even bigger audience is waiting for me from now on.“ Len was about to sigh, but another voice interrupted him „Is it really fine for you to live this way?“ Grant turned around towards the sound. „Who is it?“
Suddenly, an old man was standing in the door. „Colonel Stuart. I am relieved to see a real soldier.“ Stuart pulled out his military badge and casually approached Grant. „I saw many soldiers and battlefields. I know that the real you is not looking for applause from the audience. You want a burning sensation of the battle.“ „Hold on. What do you mean?“ „To you, fighting ring is too narrow. Do you not want to take advantage of

your power to its full potential? Do you not want to taste the thrill you can not have in a fight with human opponent?“
Wild grin appeared on Grant's face. „When you put it like that... There is no such an opponent. I can tell you, I got too good.“ „You are not lying.“ „Let's go then.“ Len and Colonel Stuart nodded.

Prison near Los Angeles

„Don't take it personally Kit.“ Phillips had the kind of cold, calculative face that Kit saw only rarely. „I've only seen this prison on television so far. It really seems free.“ The rider shrugged. „Well, there are no dangerous criminals here.“ Of course, the site was surrounded by a high concrete wall and the prison officers carried firearms. They had to go through many security checks before reaching the meeting room. However, the atmosphere of the place was fairly light and calm. The prisoners were reading magazines or watching television.
It hardly felt like prison.
The visitors passageway was dim. „It's so casual it makes me uncomfortable. This place should be inspected.“ „Hmm.“ Kit answered without paying attention.
On the other hand, inmates have been paying attention. He caught someone's eye and turned away quickly.
The meeting room looked more like a cafeteria. Open space facing the courtyard with round tables and nice chairs. They sat down, waiting.
Soon, Drew was sent in to meet them. „Hey.“ He sat across the table from them. Seeing his smile caused ill feeling to rise in Kit's chest. Memories of the man, who deceived him and made him fight Len forced their way into his mind.
„I just asked someone about something or perhaps saw someone. You know, rumors...“ Seeing no reaction, he paused for moment, apparently to rethink his strategy.
„Okay, I stole something, but really it's no big deal. I am not a fraud, just misblamed and sued because someone got ahead of themselves.“ „So, Drew...“ Phillips threw the Torque deck on the table as if it could physically block the string of blatant lies. Drew looked at it funny. „Well, is this a toy? Are you going to sell it? What is the target demograhy? We can decide sale plans if you give me contact adress. I think it was a good encounter for everyone today.“ „That's not why are we here.“ Completely fed up with the conman's behavior, Kit cut Drew off. „Well, then why did you bother?“
„This deck belongs to you.“ Phillips jumped into conversation before something ugly could happened. „In fact, it did in past. Before you were arrested for many frauds a year ago.“ „Wait, you say... “ Drew's smug face fell. „Do you know what happened a year ago? The time I don't remember...“ „We know all your innocent crimes.“ Phillips leaned in, bringing his face close to Drew's.
„If you cooperate with us, I will hand over the deck. You'll get your memories and a release by legal meassures.“
Drew leaned back, visibly alarmed.
„Who are you?!“
„But if you don't listen to us...“
He launched back with such a force that their faces nearly slammed together.
„Okay, okay, okay. I get it. Let me think.“
„No, the situation is urgent. You have to decide now. If you wait too long, you'll live here for another twenty years.“ Kit looked at Phillips. „Wait a moment, this can't be the same as with Xaviax. We can give him more time.“ Agent Phillips shook his head, his voice sounding very tired. „Kit, I can't afford to wait despite your "gentle" persuasion. I have the duty to protect this country. If you call this agressive and cowardly, that's fine by me.“ He went on looking around and fidling with his hands as if he was waiting for his dinner order rather than someone to decide their own fate.
Drew's face became a battlefield of various emotions. Anger, suspicion, desperation, desire, even fear.
Then his shoulders slumped in defeat.

„Finish it.“
„Take the deck then.“
He grabbed the deck from the table.
„Like this? ... Oh“
His expression changed like if someone shot him and he rolled off the chair, landing on the ground with a thud. They couldn't see any prisoners or prison guards, but they were definitely watching.
„Ow, my head!“
He sat on the ground holding his head. Inmates and guards came in to check on him. „It's nothing. We'll be leaving shortly.“ Prison guard who could smell bribe from No Men called the others out, but inmates remained, looking for a break in their monotonous life. It was understandable that they watched the visitors so eagerly upon their arrival.
Drew stood up and wiped the sweat of his forehead with his sleeve. He leaned forward, watching Kit's face intently. „I was wondering why a kid came to visit. Is he a superhero or what?“ Kit didn't let himself be intimidated by this and stared at Drew with cold anger. „Drew, I honestly have no idea why I should trust you, but that's just how things are.“ „Is Xaviax stil around?“ The conman sat down, his smug smile back. „Not anymore. You can't get your dreams of becoming Earth's king.“ The smile faltered a bit. Agent Phillips shot Kit an annoyed look. „The monster activity is on the rise and we don't have enough people to manage it.“ „I don't mind not being trusted. It won't be the same.“ Noone believed the man, who was vented for betraying Xaviax. „I have no idea what will happen if we get someone worse that you.“ Kit answered. „That's fine by me. Let's go.“ „I forgot to mention“ Phillips stopped him „you will have a duty and we will check on you regularly. If you exploit the power, you will be behind the bars in no time.“ Resulting expression reminded Kit of a kid let into candy store and then told that he can't touch anything. „Wait a moment, then it's not a release, but a probation.“ Agent Phillips shrugged.
„It's still a reward. You can drink alcohol among other things.“ „A crap reward.“
The way Drew's face distorted in disgust made Kit chuckle against his better judment. He was rewarded with not one, but two stink eyes.
„What are you looking at?“
„Nothing.“
„Yeah, still the same stupid kid.“
„Better get going.“
Phillips watched Drew take off the light blue vest that marked him as an inmate. He was repaid with a protest provoking glance. „Yeah, let's go.“ Kit let out a tired laugh.

„Closer... Stop!“ Richie's voice echoed through the concrete walls of the parking lot. „Good job.“ A cultured gentleman lowered the window of his Jaguar and offered Richie a ten dollar bill. „Always, Mister. Always.“ Richie thanked the man, took the money and placed it in his pocket. He pulled out the radio transmitter and signaled his colleagues. „D block here. We've got one in. There are seven open spaces.“ The answer came nearly immediately. „Okay, we'll count with it.“
Shortly after, a Buick came in, tires screeching. Richie wiped the sweat from his forehead and led the car to a free parking space.

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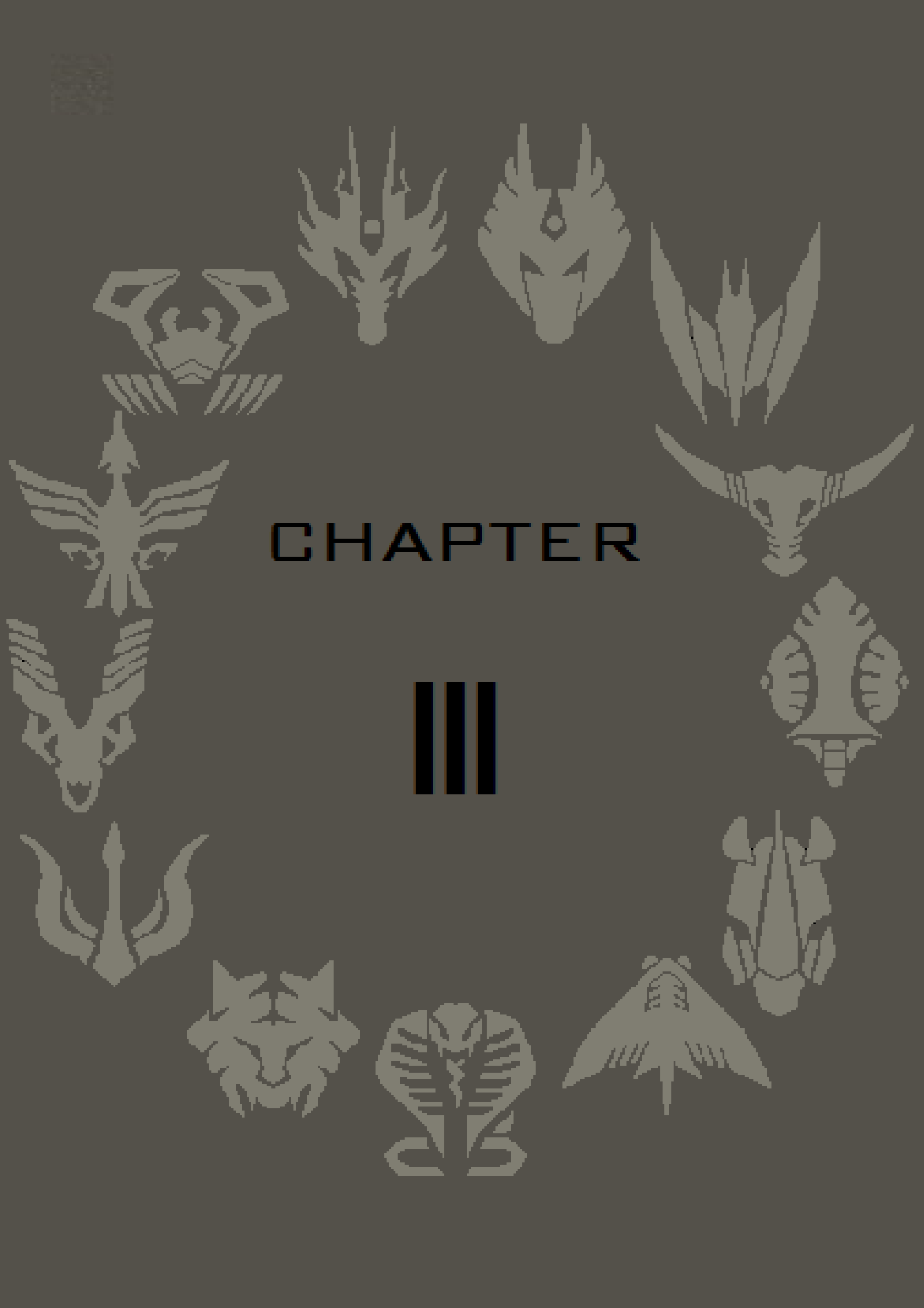
„Richie, let's go for a drink.“ Cam suggested eagerly. The man in question looked up from the basin, having just washed dust from his face.
„Who's up?“
„The usual. Lee, Diego, Doug and grandpa Ian.“ „Alright.“
Richie has been going out with them since he started the job. The nearby pub was crowded with blue collars on their way home just like them. Funny stories got traded around, arguments over Angels winning or losing started and ended, talk about women and work followed. Tortilla chips were served with steak. Somewhere, Spanish and Chinese resounded. Richie felt that he enjoys life more here and now than when reading the catalog of new french cruises and deciding which one he'll pick for himself and his wannabe friends.
He tried to push his way through the crowd to the bar. „Sorry... excuse me ... coming through.“
A strange, echoing noise carried clearly above the pub's hubbub.
„This is ...“ Deformed shapes moved in the mirror behind the bar. „No...“
The monster noticed Richie and hid itself out of the sight. He stood frozen with fear, listening to the alarm. „No way.“ he muttered.
The monster reflected in bottles, wall railings, puddles on the floor...
It shook him out his work exhaustion in a moment. „Richie, come here.“
Cam raised his glass. It carried another monstrous reflection. „Watch out!“
Richie rushed over to Cam and knocked the glass out of his hand. It shattered on the floor. He could see the monster running away, its reflection dancing madly in every shard.
„Hey, that was my drink!“
„What's wrong with you?!“
„Are you drunk already?“
Richie faced his increasingly suspicious friends. He draw in a heavy breath. Lee leaned in to smell it. Other guests gradually stopped paying attention and returned to their own chit-chats. „Sorry, nothing... everything... whatever...“ Richie's shaking hand clutched the deck in his pocket. „What's going on? Something you need to talk about?“ „Nah. It's getting late for him.“ Doug pointed to his wristwatch. They were living in cheap, unsafe neighborhood. It wasn't a good idea to return home after nighfall. Richie nodded and left the bar for a bus stop.
„Hey, Richie.“
He turned around to see one of his collegues approaching. „Oh, granpa Ian.“ „There must be something troubling you.“ Ian's nose, set in an old, wrinkled face, cringed as he was talking to Richie.
„Nothing.“
„I wish that was true.“
„I am sorry for that.“
„Richie, there are only four things in this world.“
Ian raised up his right hand with four fingers up. „Lecture of our grandfather coming right up.“ The old

worker overlooked that comment with dignity.
„I do something because I can, I want to do it but I can't, I don't do it because I can't and I don't do it because I don't want to.“ „Yeah, yeah.“ Ian looked at his hand thoughtfully. „Through time, I realized that there was another thing.“ „That's good when you still have the rest of your life to use the knowledge.“ „It's something I don't want to do, but have to.“ „Oh ...“ Richie's shoulders deflated.
„Usually, if you don't solve the problem soon, it will only get worse. That's what I learned from Eagle's life. It was long ...“ „I heard he was an excellent car dealer.“ „Yes. He was wealthy, but traded stocks without knowing anything and fell into great debt. I knew that someone was cheating the company, but didn't do anything to fix it. The company went bankrupt, my family left me and I ended up on the streets. „Well, where are your wife and child now?“ „I don't know. Richie, whatever you do, please think about it. Don't do anything you will regret. Don't wait until your time comes. The future won't wait for you either.“ „I'll remember it.“ A memory of the monster nearly touching Cam's wrist came to his mind and made him clutch the deck instinctively.
The bus came. Richie shielded himself from the headlights.

Office of team Gold Rangers

Smith raised his voice again after the hitting the desk. „How could you make such a simple mistake?!“ Brad Barrett was not one to receive a reprimand with straight face. „Sorry. Sorry for overlooking the start signal! I was thinking!“ „That's the reason?! You used to be a lead rider, but who are you now? Don't forget that you were fired for abandoning your previous team. I was the one who picked you up again. I don't know what personal issues you have, but if you ruin everything, I can cancel your contract any time.“ „No, wait!“ „It's not just today. We had this conversation before, Brad. You always have excuses. "I was worried I missed cornering", "I couldn't sleep at night", "I was late for the team meeting". The motocross championship I observed from childhood fell to this level! The top rider has no motivation and the staff goes anywhere they get more money because the top rider has no motivation.“ Smith got even more fired up because Brad looked defiant rather than guilty. Brad wasn't actually feeling defiant. That was just the default expression of his face. In spite of that, he had to endured the speech of the young owner, who invested into the team. „It's not like I couldn't understand you from a human perspective. We all have our problems.“ The speech was closing in on twenty minutes, so Smith's anger was starting to fizzle out anyway and his voice calmed down.
„Next time, you're fired.“ „I understand.“ Brad winced and rushed out of the office. „Damn this thing!“ Running down the stairs, Brad took the deck out of his racing jacket's pocket. With it in hand, he started hearing monsters. It haunted him day and night. Covering his ears didn't help. The sound went straight into his skull.
In the garage, at home, at the racing track...
He even threw it on the ground and stomped on it, but it came out without a scratch.
Brad jumped on his off-road bike parked outside and peeled off the curb full-throttle. The sound came in nearly instantly. „This is a trial that Brad Barrett is going to win.“
Brad drove through the street at excessive speed and jumped the intersection on a red light. He passed cars, motorcycles and pedestrians surprised by the screaming of drivers and screeching of brakes and car horns.
He was deep into the suburbs before long. He turned around couple times before thoughtlessly stopping. Brad pulled off his helmet and looked around. His breathing was rough, his chest still constrained by anger. Blood was rushing in his ears. The sound was still there. Of course he couldn't shake it off. Monster reflected in the tank of the motorcycle.
„Brad Barett always wins.“
Brad took the deck out of his pocket and thrust his hands out. The energy shot out like a lightning bolt from the deck to his waist, creating the belt buckle. He inserted the deck and shouted 'Kamen Rider!'
Energy sphere wrapped around him, finishing the transformation in Kamen Rider Thrust.
He rammed his hand into the reflective surface, grabbing the monster by neck and dragging it out like a fish

out of pond.
„Come out!“
Blue monstrous beetle with long haptics rolled out on the grass. Thrust pulled out a card from the deck and threw it into the slot in his left shoulder. **Strike Vent**
A long metal horn shaped like rhino's head attached to his right arm. He stabbed the monster.
Once, twice, three times, four times.
The monster let out a gurgling nose, toppled over and hit the ground. Armored shoe kicked it. Brad was burning with anger, hitting and kicking the monster in a manner that didn't give it any chance of retaliation.
„Good, good, good...!“ Monster managed to get up and tried to run. „You're not going anywhere.“ Thrust pulled out his triumph card. **Final Vent**
Thrust's Advent Beast, rhino Metalgelas, appeared behind Brad. He let out a smug laugh before jumping up and letting himself be propelled by Metalgelas towards the monster.
The finisher, Heavy pressure.
The monster was pierced by the Strike Vent and exploded. Behind its charred remains, Thrust violently raised his hand in triumph.


CHAPTER
III

The battle spread across a modern building in Third reality's town. Llightweight monkey monster kept on attacking from all sides. From behind, from bellow, overhead and just about any other dirrection without being seen at all. It was shooting from its beam gun randomly, dodging the counterattacks efortlessly. A rider was running around the place trying to chase it down. Attack from bellow was answered by attack from above. The Deadlimmer was shooting like crazy, which it probably was anyway. Suddenly it jumped up like on bungee cord and stuck to the side of a skyscraper.
A green monster, Camo's Advent Beast, Biogreeza, sneaked behind it and shot its tongue out, but not at the monster. „Hello, beastie.“ The tongue hooked up and pulled Camo into the sight from the Clear Vent-induced invisibility. His Advent Beast swung him wildly, he tackled the Deadlimmer and slammed it head first into the ground.
„KO!“
Camo let out victorious laughter before landing on the ground and striking a pose on the background of the monster exploding. Then he took out the communicator handed to him by No Men and reported to the HQ.
„Grant here. I defeated those three monsters. Anything else around here?“
„There are no reports at the moment.“
„OK! By the way Trent, how many knockouts I have?“
„How many monsters have you destroyed?“
„Yeah, how many compared to other riders?“
„I don't know. I didn't count that. Kit and Len have been fighting for long, so you're definitely not on the top.“
„Nah, it doesn't matter. I will fight at my best and overcome their score.“
„You can try, but please be careful.“
„You don't have to tell me. I am fine so I'll just keep on going.“
„No,“ Agent Philips interrupted the transmission. „we can't have you injured because you fought more than necessary.“
„This is hard work, you know.“
„Yeah, you wish. OK, then. Grant out.“
Camo detransformed. He wiped sweat from his forehead, whistled a happy tune and headed for a mirror to go home. Suddenly, Incisor appeared. „Oh, I was late. I have lost a lot of time.“ he muttered and set a card in the visor. **Strike Vent**
Synthetic speech resounded in the empty world. Pincers of huge crab appeared on Incisor's right hand. Grant's jaw fell. „Hey!?“
Raising the sharpened limb, Incisor attacked Grant. „What's going on?“ „That was an unique fight. Seems you have reached the full potential of Camo deck. Time to harvest it.“ „I don't know what you are talking about. It doesn't matter. Riders are better to fight than monsters anyway.“ Grant trust the deck into the belt. „Kamen Rider!“
He became clad in green-grey armor again. „Ha ha! Yeah!“ Camo ran at Incisor, opening with low kick and fierce punch. It was a breathless continuous attack. However, Incisor stood his ground. Camo aimed a highkick at the side of Incisor's head, but was punched away before the kick connected. „Damn!“ „What's wrong?“ Incisor made a provoking gesture at Camo. „Don't mess with me!“ He pulled out a card in retaliation. **Clear vent**
A dust cloud was blown through the place where Camo disappeared. It outlined his body as he jumped up into the sky and attacked from the above. Incisor didn't shield himself or try to escape. He held his ground, muttering something chaotically.
„Upper right, upper left, front.“ „What?“
Incisor followed all attacks by sound and deflected them. Camo yelped in surprise. „Get down to the ground,

back kick, jump kick, foot sweep.“ All Camo's attacks were avoided in fluid dance-like motion. It seemed like a practice – finding right stategies for right opponents.
„Damn.“
„Punch back and forth.“
Incisor moved his head away from the unseen punch, turned around and kicked the space behind him. „Ouch!“ His kick connected, Camo doubled over and fell to the ground. His invisibility wavered.
„You can't hit me. I've seen all your attacks before.“
„What was that ... Damn....“
Grant tried to stand up, dizziness slowed him down significantly. „We've fought once already. Time has been rewound.“ Incisor pulled out Time Vent and waved it. „So I can understand your attacks.“ „Where did you get that card?“ „No need to know.“ „Damn!“ Incisor jumped out of Camo's way. „I am sorry, but I can't let you get out of this ring, Grant.“ Strike Vent hit Grant's back. „Uh...“ Grant desperately took a card out of the deck and inserted it in his visor. **Final Vent**
Camo jumped up and Biogreeza's tongue wrapped around his leg. „Bastard, I'll kill you!“ He swooped in and attacked Incisor, who saw it coming and slowly pulled out a card of his own. **Confine Vent**
„What!?“ Biogreeza disappeared and Camo landed on the ground in a messy heap. „This guy is KO.“ Incisor set in last card. **Final vent**
Volcancer, a huge golden crab Advent Beast appeared behind Incisor and launched Incisor high. He folded into a shell covered ball and hit Grant hard. „Aaaaaaa!“ He was blown through the wall and embedded into another.
„Good, at least you have a nice view.“ Incisor said, but Camo no longer answered. His body started clearing and falling apart, eventually disappearing without a trace. He was vented. Only his deck fel to the ground. Incisor caught it and disappeared into the mirror.

DOUBT AND CONFUSION

Phillips scowled at Richie, who was late for the meeting at the headquarters.
„Why are you late?“
„Sorry, my work dragged. Did something happen?“
„I can't contact Grant.“
Richie's face wrinkled with worry nearly immediately. „What? Why?“ „He called in yesterday at 6 PM to inform us that he had defeated monsters, but he hadn't returned home afterwards.“ „That's a whole day already. Distressing, that's for sure.“ „Maybe he was vented?“ Kit raised his voice uneasily to present the worse case scenario. „I don't even want to think about it.“ „Without any signal from his deck, we have to count with some kind of accident. That assumption is probably correct.“ „It's hard not to think about accidents in a situation like this. It seems he was vented in Third reality.“ Colonel Stuart said seriously.
„Is there a monster powerful enough to beat him?“
„He should be able to take care of himself, shouldn't he?“
„Maybe, but so far, we haven't observed such a monster.“
Philips stared at Brad silently with unreadable expression. „What was that?“ Before anyone answered, Stuart looked around on all riders gathered to get their attention. „There are three options: unknown monsters, ventaran assasins or.... I don't even want to think about it, but there may be a traitor among us.“ „What?!“ The riders instinctively looked at each other. „Colonel, that can't be possible!“ „No ventaran assasins could get there either.“
Chris and Kit desperately tried to soothe everyone. „I also trust Ventara, but we have to believe veteran's instincts. I will examine all options without prejudice and find out why was Grant vented. You guys are soldiers too, you should do the same.“ „Well, of course.“ someone muttered bitterly. „You see, nobody can trust a rider after all.“ Drew stood up and smiled sarcastically. „What again, Drew?“ Brad scowled at him. „Yeah, you're getting easy shifts all on your own.“ Drew nodded towards Brad. „In other words, don't you have the least alibi?“ „I am working both as a racer and a rider. It's not as easy as you have it.“ he spat.
„Richie is usually with someone and has a job, but do you think it guarantees so much trust?“ „I am not fighting to gain your trust.“ „What did you say...!“ „Stop, you two!“ „Hey, calm down!“ Kit and Len tried to break them apart. Drew kept his glance locked with Brad's and pushed Kit away. „If you idiots can stand his laziness, I can make off without a permission too. I'll do things my way.“ With that, he turned around and stomped out of the room. „Drew, flying solo is dangerous.“ Phillips called out after him, but was ignored.
„I think Drew is mad that he is the only one under supervision. Don't mind him, Kit.“ „Thanks, Trent.“
„I'll go home for now.“ Richie shrugged and left.

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Drew was washing the anger down with a lime corona in a small Mexican pub facing the South Bay. The sun has gone down already. Last rays of sunshines were dancing in the glass, fluttering like fire in night wind.
„Here you are, Drew.“ „Return home, brat. You're out past the curfew. Were you searching for me?“ „No, I found your motorcycle by a chance and I thought it would be nice to just sit down. Can I?“ „Suit yourself.“
Kit got Ginger ale and Chilli dog at the counter and sat on the seat opposite from Drew.
„Do you think that it's true?“ „What's true?“ „That there is a traitor among riders.“ „No idea.“
„But if it's true, it's dangerous to be out on your own.“ „You sure got an interesting theory there... Well, if so, I think it's far worse for traitors to be side by side.“ „Well, I guess...“ „Hmm.“
Drew grabbed the bottle and emptied it all at once. „Everyone suspects me anyway.“ „What?“ „When that soldier said there is a traitor among us everyone looked at me.“ „No, they were just surprised, so they looked at each other.“
However, Drew didn't want to listen to any excuses. „They weren't wrong. Only I and JTC knew that Xaviax

is an alien invading Earth. We were cooperating with him. That's why. I betrayed Earth once, but I changed my mind. I want a good life. We divide the necessary work and fight monsters in shifts.“ „That is what...“ Drew slammed the bottle on the table so hard the glass jumped. „I tell you, I am not Judas. You can sleep tight even when I am around. I'll definitely survive because the traitors always lose, don't they?“
„Drew...“
„Well then,“ Drew stood up. „you didn't see me here.“ „Hmm.“ He sat on his bike and blowing the throttle a couple of times, he ran away.

Wing Knight's weapon, Wing Lancer, ripped through the monsters one after another. Three red Minions screamed and exploded. „You go, Len!“
Sting took out the Final Vent card and initiated his finisher, Hydro Venom. „Here I go!“
He jumped on his Advent Beast, Evildiver, and flew into a group of monsters at high speed. Its wings tore through them with ease. Sting landed on the ground just as the monsters exploded. Wing Knight came over and held out his hand to help him up.
„That was great, Chris.“
„Thanks.“
Taking Wing Knight's hand, Sting lifted himself onto his feet. „Guess this place is done.“ The two detransformed just before the communicators rang again. „I found a densely populated monster site. There are about five figures of them.“
„What?!“ „Ow, ah!“ „Brad, what's wrong?“ „It's bad, they saw me, I need support, quickly!“ „Brad?!“ „Chris, Len, can you hear me? Go help Brad. Drew, you too.“ „That idiot ruins all our hard work.“ Drew's voice could be heard in the background of Phillips giving instructions.
„Sting and Wing Knight, we'll be there in a moment.“ „Please hurry. Trent, call Kit and Richie. They are off duty at the moment.“ „I got to Kit, but I can't contact Richie.“ „What ...? It can't be helped, five people have to manage somehow.“ Phillips disconnected from the call.

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The monsters were gathering in Third reality's forest. Wing Knight and Sting jumped out of a reflection in a puddle and ran towards the battle. Torque and Dragon Knight followed after them. „Brad!“ Thrust got blown away and landed before them. „Uh?... Brad Barrett will not lose to anything!“ It was a brave boast when he was so beaten up he could hardly stand straight.
„How do you feel, Brad?“ „I'll pull through.“ Torque inserted card into his handgun type Magna Visor. „This is incredible, please do come in.“ FINAL VENT
A buffalo Advent Beast, Magnugiga, appeared in front of Torque. All of its body parts opened up to reveal cannons and guns. „In the meantime, this will do the trick.“ Torque set Magna Visor in the slot in Magnugiga's back. „Come on, showy.“ Torque pulled the trigger. All kinds of ammunition were fired towards the monsterous swarms. He considered the harmony of their varied screams a gentle compliment to his power.
As the flames died down, they revealed a burnt area the size of baseball stadium with a few monsters left. „Let's finish this.“ The riders ran into the field lined up.
Dragon Knight's sword dug into a shark monster. Wing Knight took on a small group of bee monsters, rushing them with the Wing Lancer. The eagle monster that tried to take off into the sky was knocked down with Sting's whip. Thrust's metal horn burst a jelly fish monster. Torque decided to head in covered by advancing Dragon Knight. He used the Magna Visor to snipe monsters.
Five riders fought together, destroying one monster after another. In dozen minutes, the monstrous swarms were gone and silence has returned to the forest.

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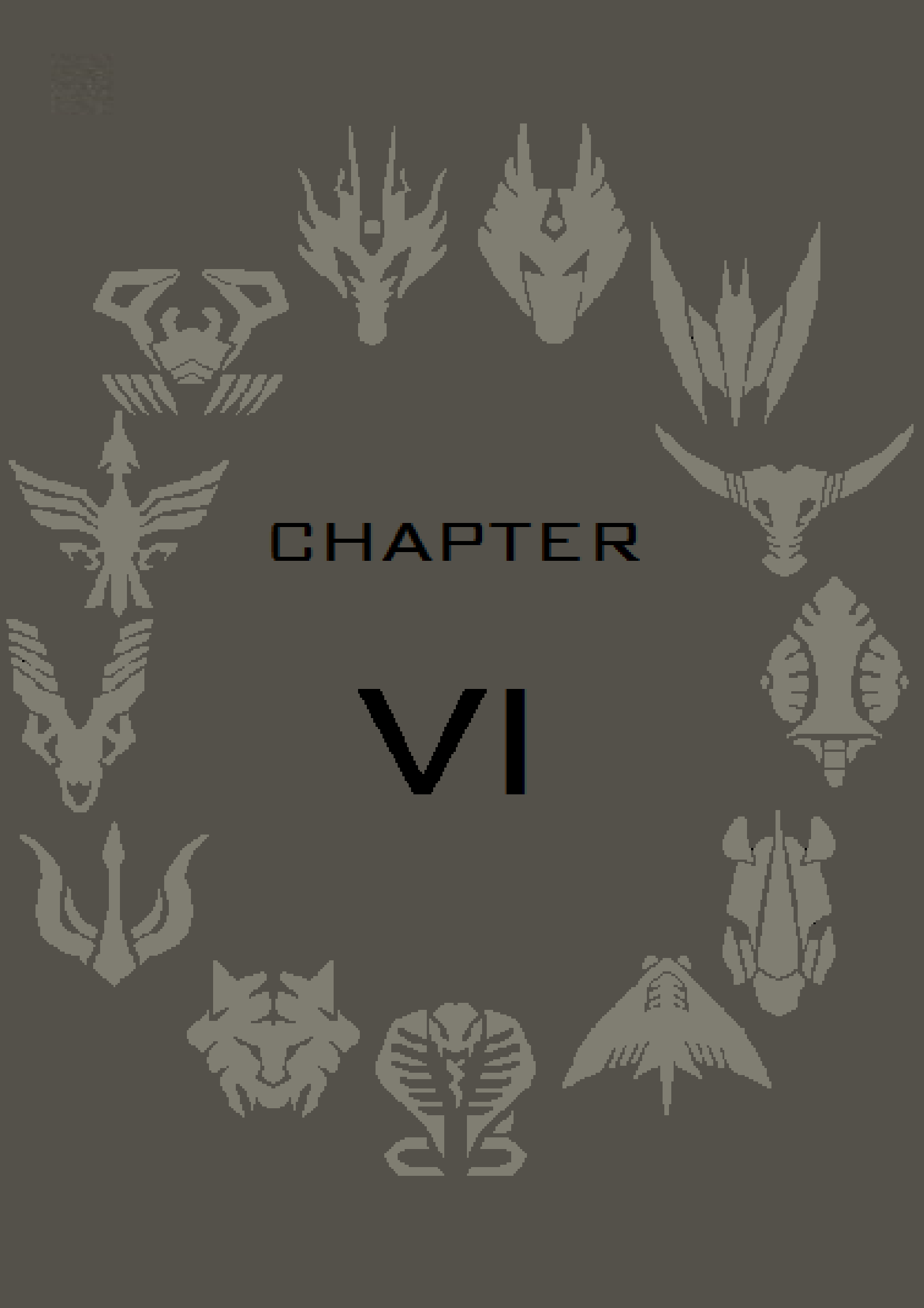
The mirror at No Men's HQ rippled before the riders came out of it.
„I defeated the most monsters.“
„I did a lot.“
„Mirror travel is awful.“

Len and Kit chatted about the battle. „Don't worry, guys.“
Colonel Stuart appeared as a shower of cold water. Air tensed up. He was looking for Brad.
„Mr. Thrust, there is a technique to scouting. It's not about rushing in alone. It wasn't even your task today.“ „It's fine, isn't it? I defeated monsters.“ „Your results were good, but that doesn't change anything on the fact you endangered yourself and others. That could have been a catastrophe.“ Reprimands marched down as troops. „Hmm.“ Brad looked at Stuart and left with even sourer expression than usual. „Wait, Brad.“ Chris caught up to him in the corridor. „What?“ „I know it's easier to fight than to speak, but Grant is gone because there might enemies we don't know about. Those who stand out of the line are a problem for everyone else.“ Brad brushed Chris' hand off. „Do young Marines listen to their seniors?“ „What? You and Richie have too many selfish moments when you don't need them. Why do you, what exactly do you...“
With that said, Chris suddenly came face to face with Brad. „Seriously? I know I am selfish, but I want to finish this as quickly as possible and return to my life. If you don't like it, I'm not sorry.“ Chris and Brad pulled out their deck at the same time. „Kamen Rider!“ They transformed and ran into the mirror.

Third reality

Sting and Thrust slowly walked horizontally to each other in careful distance on the floor of a storage room. Sting disappeared in a gap between freight containers. Thrust jumped on the container's top, but Sting was gone already.
„Here!“
He moved to Thrust's blind spot and stroke his leg from behind. Thrust leaned on the wall by his side. „Damn you!“ Thrust equipped himself with a metal horn and ran towards Sting. He landed a hit on Sting's chest that thrown him back. He got up quickly and kept a distance between the two of them. They circled each other again. Then, they heard a whistling noise like a snapping string.
„What's that?“ „Watch out!“
They dodged a rocket. „What's wrong, fellowship of losers? Looks like a fullhouse.“ Torque stood on a building, holding a bazooka. „Drew?!“ „Bastard, what are you doing?“ „Can I join your card match?“ Torque aimed the still smoking Giga Launcher at Sting and Thrust. There was another sharp flight sound. He jumped down from the roof quickly as the place was blown to pieces. „Where did it come from?“ Thrust looked around.
There was another Torque holding a cannon, standing on a different building. „Hey faker. Why me? What are scheming?“ „What?!“ „Why is there another Torque?“ The Torque that appeared earlier stood up and said „What am I planning? I'll tell you... this.“
He shot at Another Torque with Magna Visor, making him jump down and hide in the shade of the containers. Torque also hid and they took turns peaking out from cover and shooting at each other. It looked just like shootout in a police procedural. Stray bullets scattered around, causing the materials stacked around Thrust to collapse.
A box bounced off his helmet. „Hey, you two. Watch it! Which...“
Torque called out to Thrust and Sting. „The rule is ... only the real thing can be the real thing.“ „Yeah, only Drew can spout such a majestatic line.“ They ran towards him.
Another Torque aimed at them, but they ran in ziggzagging lines. Sting attacked from above and Thrust from bellow. Sting delivered a flying kick to Another Torque, who then had to defend himself from Thrust's punches. Sting followed up with another kick. Another Torque rolled on the ground, dodged and shot from the Magna Visor. The shots hit Thrust and Sting in the chest. However, this barely slowed them down.
They launched a joint attack. Another Torque went on defensive. Torque pulled out a card. FINAL VENT
Torque connected Magna Visor to Magnugiga's back. „OK, to your positions!“
Thrust and Sting took cover behind Magnugiga. „I'll blow him to the east coast!“ Another Torque pulled a card of his own. FREEZE VENT
Torgue pulled the trigger, but nothing happened. Magnugiga was stuck open, unable to fire. „What?! Move!

Move!“ „Something is wrong? Then allow me to continue.“ „What?“
Another Torque pulled out a card. **Final Vent**
Second Magnugiga appeared before him. „What the...!“ He initiated the attack as Torque did. „Damn! Move!“ Torque desperately hit the trigger, trying to unfreeze Magnugiga.
At last, the trigger was pulled, sending number of shells, bullets and rays at Torque and his immobile Advent Beast. A massive explosion occured. Flames and smoke covered the area. **Final Vent**
Two shadows flew out of the smoke. Evildiver and Sting started their own Final Vent. Thrust was just behind them with Metalgelas. They both attacked Another Torque. „Hmmm.“ He remained unfazed, pulled out a card and inserted it in his visor. **Confine Vent**
Suddenly, Evildiver disappeared from under Sting's feet. „What!?“ Sting fell before Another Torque, right in path of Heavy Pressure. „Out of the way!“ „Wow! Ah ah ah!“ The sharp tip of Thrust's Strike Vent bit Sting in the chest and threw him away. „Chris!“
Thrust was grabbed by Another Torque and pressed against the ground. Smoke was rising from his armor. The damage from End Of World was considerable even away from direct impact. „Naughty player, Brad Barett. Trying to run away.“ Another Torque grabbed Thrust's head and turned towards Sting, whose body has been disintegrating. „What have I done...“ „And you shall be punished for it!“ Another Torque brought Magna Visor in to shoot from close range. Thrust's body rolled over.
„This is a test..... Brad Barrett ... will overcome it.“
„Then how about this?“
Another Torque set card into his visor. **Copy Vent**
Another Torque flipped the card taken from visor and showed it to Thrust. „This is...“ He set the card into the visor and loaded it. **Attack Vent**
Metalgelas appeared next to Another Torque. Its eyes shined brightly and its shoulders heaved. Thrust's body trembled like it had never before.
„Come on, try and overcome this challenge.“ The confused Advent Beast stomped towards Thrust, who was frozen with fear and pain. „Oh, here we go.“ Another Torque shot a debris mountain and Torque came tumbling out. His originally shining green armor was dirtied and faded into bland black and grey one. He lost Magnugiga to the attack, causing their Contract to break.
„Uh?“
Desperately reaching for his side arm, he found out it has become a small single-shot gun.
„Goodbye, conman.“ Magna Visor shot at him. Torque's body fell like broken doll and started disintegrating.
„What about this?“
As Another Torque turned around, Metalgelas and Thrust has already disappeared. Thrust's deck layed on the ground. Nearby, wind was pushing Sting's deck across the pavement. Another Torque picked up the decks and faded away.


CHAPTER
VI

Heavy air hung in the back room of Grace's Books, adding to its funereal atmosphere.
Kit sat on the sofa, still and silenced by shock. He couldn't believe that Chris was gone. Neither could Maya. She was leaning on Lacey. Her friend was actually speechless for once. „I don't know what to do... Chris didn't want to leave his military career and I handed the decks to Drew and Brad.“ Kit covered his face with his hands and leaned back on the sofa.
„Kit ...“ „It's going to be alright.“ Maya managed to whisper as she and Lacey were watching him. One anxiously, one intently. He didn't stir. „You told me that Price is going to be okay.“ „That doesn't have anything to do with this!“ Kit sat up abruptly. „Chris could have been vented or killed!“ Maya was surprised by his sharp tone. „Sorry...“ „Maya is worried because until we get to the other side, everything she believes in is a lie.“ Maya stiffened, mortified by Lacey's words. Kit turned to them briefly.
„Oh... sorry.“ „If we can restore connection with Ventara, Master Eubulon can bring Chris back from the Advent Void. That's all we have to believe.“ „But to die alone...“
Silence fell for a moment. Then, the door opened without anyone knocking beforehand and Michelle charged in. „Kit, I understand your feelings, but we can't sit around being sad.“ „You don't feel bad about Chris? He is gone... again.“ „No Men has made a decision. We'll bring in the Cho Brothers.“ „What!?“ Kit jumped up. „They're just step away from JTC!“ Hearing that name caused Maya's face to darken. The wounds on her broken heart have only barely healed. Kit knew that all too well.
„But there is no other way.“ „Len...“
Len and Trent came in after Michelle. „I am looking for Kase's mirror twin and Vic, but I don't expect much. Their DNA is our only trace. Kit, do you have a sample in your medical records?“ „No.“ „DNA of individual people is rarely recorded, so no matter what records we get, we can't find anyone.“
„I get it. Do what you need.“ Kit turned away.
„I'll go fetch those two. Actually, it's not that bad a decision. They will do anything if they get paid.“ „That's ridicously enthusiastic. Do you really want to meet them so much?“ „Nope. What's wrong, Kit? Why are you so upset? You need to calm down.“ Len put his hand on Kit's shoulder briefly before leaving the room. „So Trent, what about the date?“ „Ah, sorry ... it looks like...“ Lacey's speech and Trent's dry laughter made the atmosphere even more uncomfortable. „I am not sure. With the Cho Brothers around...“

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The two people whose name was called turned away from the bike they were about to steal. Their violent gazes centered on the source of the sound.
„What?“ „Are you police?“
Stuart and Len held their ground without problems. Rabid dogs couldn't concern them. „That's okay. Let them have a little bite.“ Danny grinned and took Stuart by collar. Invisible force seized the short thief and shook him up and down before casually flinging him away into a nearby alley. He splat on the asphalt hard.
„Ouch!“
„Bro!“
Albert turned around. „You bastard!“ He got into Stuart's face, but Len caught him by the arm and twisted it behind his back. „Ouch! Let go of me! I'll kill you!“ „Damn, let him go!“
Danny picked himself up and ran in to make a grab for Len, who held him off with his free hand. „Kill him!“ Len rolled his eyes. „Amateurs, exactly like I was told. Are they even useful to you?“ Stuart shook his head.
„I'll let you go in a moment.“ Len forced the Spear deck into Albert's hand before throwing him away. „Uh... what's...!“ Without Len's support, younger of the brothers fell on the ground and clutched his head. „Albert! What did you do to my brother?“ „Oh, here you go too.“ Danny was also thrown on the pavement and had a deck pressed into his hand. Stuart ignited a cigarette while looking down on the duo as they moaned in pain.

When the cigarette burned down to half, the Cho brothers wiped sweat of their faces and got up on their own. „Bastards...“ Danny looked at Len and his eyes widened. „You're with the guy who vented Albert!“ „They got their memory back.“ „Then, why am I here?“ „Xaviax is out of the equation and you went back to being ordinary thugs.“ Danny and Albert mutually agreed on remembering that.
„Oh, it seems so.“ „So what's up now?“
„We're fighting a new battle, but not between each other anymore. We fight monsters.“ „We have lost many riders already.“ „Can't be helped. We'll just keep to ourselves.“ „No one says it will be for free. We can give you a job at governmental agency once this is all over.“ „You're joking?“
„Oh?“ Stuart sighed. „It is an attractive condition for you two. A regular job as civil workers.“ „We're going to work in an office!“ „We'll use the decks to fight for peace and stability of this country!“ Danny looked at Albert. Albert nodded a little. They took off in opposite directions. „Wait!“ Len and Stuart chased after them. However, the place was like a maze and they lost sight of them soon.

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„Heck, they've followed us pretty long.“ Danny ran into a warehouse at the edge of the abandoned area and rubbed the bridge of his nose. Albert has been waiting for him already. Danny was proud of their escaping technique. „Um, bro...“ Albert looked at the deck in his hands. „I am glad this happened.“ „What did you say, Albert?“ „Stuff is getting worse.“ The younger brother took off his leather jacket. „Gangs are spreading more and more. They lynch and murder people right on the streets. We can't be lone wolves forever.“ „We're not going to do that.“ „We have to join someone.“ Danny pointed at his broken lip earned in yesterday's beatdown from a one of the gangmembers. „I don't want to hear their "pilage and burn" crap anymore. We made an oath. End of discussion.“
„Um...“ „Brother Danny?“
A tiny voice came from the darkness. It belonged to a girl about thirteen years old. „Brother Albert?“ „Jessica.“ „See what we got.“ Albert took out a cereal box from his bag and handed it to her. „Thanks, but don't overdo it, okay?“ „Don't worry. Everything will be fine if everyone is fine.“
„Yup! Steve! William! Tony! Kathy! Jeff! Come on, older brothers brought food.“ Children came running in as soon as the names were called. They were in all ages between ten and infancy. „Wow, cereal!“ „Thank you.“ „Thank you as always.“ „Thank you.“ „Thanks.“ Brothers bowed their heads humbly. „It's nothing, really.“ „There is still some milk left, isn't there? So eat up and share with everyone.“ Someone took the cereal box like a rugby ball and run back with it, followed by other children.
„Jessica, this is for you.“ Albert took out another, smaller cereal box. „Nah, I am good.“ „Eat it. You can't go to school if you get sick again.“ „At least graduate, so you can be a proper adult.“ „Like you.“ „You have to last longer than us.“ „Like my brother, who got to the second grade? Or I who got to the fourth!“ Jessica laughed in relief and went to join others.
Danny looked at Albert. „Why did you say that? Do you think you can take on them?“ „Oh ... I guess there is the part about being dead.“ Albert sat down on the old rickety sofa. „When I was vented and disappearing, I was worried about you. My hand couldn't reach you. I cried and regretted becoming a rider.“ „I understand. I wanted to return to our previous life, but...“ Danny jerked at the memory these words brought up and briefly touched his neck.
„We were blinded by money, by the family that died in front of us... We have to be different...“ Albert looked at Danny. „Why?“ „No matter what we do, they can't even have a warm meal. I wonder what that means for us if they are right.“ „Time to turn the tides... Hmm.“ Danny curled his mounth in an O shape and marshed out of the building. „Bro, where are you going?“ „I don't care.“ „You should care about what that blonde and macho idiot said!“
Danny didn't answer and kept on walking. It was his habit when dealing with bad stuff ever since he was a kid. Blood roared in his ears, blotting out any signs of danger. This time over, Danny was going in the wrong direction. „Bro, this is the territory of Dangergang! Bean's territory!“

Danny only picked up the pace. Albert looked around anxiously and heard a voice he didn't want to hear. „My friends...“
When the brothers turned around only to see the street gang leader stand there. Bean stretched his hands, showing off the muscles made with bodybuilding and drugs. Dozen of his goons appeared, surrounding the Cho brothers. „Asians are banned from here.“ „How about you go back to Hong Kong? Or was it Taiwan?“ „Learn Kung Fu and come back.“ Lowly laughter echoed.
„Screw you.“ „Albert, get out of here. Someone is gonna to get hurt.“ Albert tried to calm Danny. „Please, let's go back.“ „What's wrong, cowards?“ „I heard that you've been picking up brats off the streets recently. Are you so weak and lonely that you have to team up and hold hands?“ „Right now, we have all your bastards together.“ „Hands off them!“ „Danny...“ Albert squeezed Danny's shoulder. „Albert, are giving up already?“ „No.“ Albert pushed Danny off and stepped away. „Let's go.“ „Yeah!“
They punched Bean and ran for it immediately after.
Short Danny was chased and knocked down in no time. Two thugs pressed him into the pavement as their fists raining down. „Bro!“ „Your back is open!“ Albert broke free, but only to have an iron pipe swing towards the back of his head. He fell down, his eyes open and unseeing. The gang members surrounded him and started kicking and stomping on him. „Albert ...!“
The Cho Brothers were beaten and brought before Bean. „This is the last 'advice'.“ he warned them.
„Think carefully.“
He curled his fingers into fist and slammed it into Danny's face. The older brother's head shot back and he was thrown on the ground. „Nice shot, boss.“ Albert went next and landed beside Danny. They were stretched out side by side for all the gang members to see. „I decided to be merciful to you bastards. You'll leave the city or join me. Your decision.“ The gang members laughed and returned back to where they came from.
„Damn...“ escaped from Danny's battered lips.

SIMPLE BATTLE

„Wanna go for a drink, Richie?“ Cam asked as Richie was washing the dust of his face. „Sorry, some other time.“ „That thing again?“ „I've got another shift tonight.“ „You work two jobs? Don't overdo it.“ „Yeah, I am just tired.“ Richie left the parking lot and walked to the bus stop. „Yeah, just exhausted.“ The workload of the remaining riders have increased significantly now that their group was reduced to less than half. This was especially tiring for Richie, who didn't want to leave his regular job and thus was stuck neither here nor there.

„You can't possibly leave me out of this, can you?“ Richie looked into a shop window behind the bus stop. The shadow reflected in it didn't belong to anything in this world. Richie hoped that his scowl would make it leave. It didn't. He shrugged, looked around to make sure noone is watching and jumped in. It led to a high roof in Third reality. And before Richie stood....

Sting, whip cracking and sending off sparks. „C'mon, I saw Pet Cementary just the other day...“ Sting launched at him, Swing Vent ready to strike. „Well, wish me good luck, because I'll need it.“ Richie pulled out his deck. Golden lightning created the belt. „Kamen Rider!“

Richie set the deck into the belt buckle and was enveloped in golden armor. He evaded the whip easily and used a card of his own. **Strike Vent**

Scissor Pincer imitating a crab apendage mounted on his right hand. Incisor attacked Sting. With this weapon he could cut through iron and concrete, but barely scratched the supposedly vented rider. Pincer clashed with whip. Sting hit Incisor and they distanced from each other.

„Don't go easy on me. I may not seem strong, but every hawk has hidden claws.“

„Yeah, right.“

Incisor mock attacked, but Sting saw through it immediately. „Compared to other riders you don't have any cards with special effects worth mentioning. It's on par with Wing Knight's deck, which you probably know from your fight with Len anyway.“ „A nostalgic story, really.“

„The defensive power is Incisor's best quality. It allows for close combat and simple tactics. Wonderful.“ „Are you done with your nonsensical praises?“ „All those things you can get from a completed deck. What a delight.“ „Whatever. There is one big mistake in your calculation. You have to defeat me!“

Incisor took oppurtunity of the interruption and brought his pincers down on Sting, who caught them with his shield-shaped visor. „This is a simple battle, but you always have to count with the possibility of losing. Do you think you can defeat me so easily?“

„Uh... That's... the thing. There is no... easy way to defeat you.“ „Oh?“ Sting kicked the Incisor and they separated. „This is your answer.“ Sting took out a card and set it into the visor on his arm. **Copy Vent**

Sting's body blurred in a mosaic pattern and reshaped. „What the...!“ Sting became his impostor.

Strike Vent Shield Vent

Pincers and shields appeared on both his arms, one each. „How come that this is the reason you can't defeat me?“ Another Incisor attacked Incisor, who evaded one pincer, but was hit in the shoulder by the other one. Any attempts to fight back were obstructed by the shields. Incisor ate another double punch and rolled away. He fell over the roof's rim, barely managing to hold onto it with his free hand. Pincer took him by the arm and lifted him up. „Help, please....“ Richie's body was dangling from the claws limply. „You shouldn't be giving up so easily...“ Another Incisor struck again before letting go. „Thank you for making this happen.“

Richie couldn't hear Another Incisor's final words.

A massive crash echoed through a building shadowed by the skyscraper. Incisor's body rolled over couple times before laying completely still on the concrete. It started to dissolve into specs of light. Richie was vented.

Another Incisor appeared to pick up the deck before leaving off to prepare another move in his plan.

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The Cho Brothers sat in their makeshift living room in silence. „I am hungry.“ „Un...“
Since they got the last notice from the Danger gang, their range of motion has narrowed significantly. If they met again, they would be killed. Getting anything was becoming flat out impossible. They could barely earn money for the children and had very little to eat themselves. „Damn!“ Albert pulled the deck out of his pocket and glared at it. „No, it doesn't matter how bad things get.“ „But bro, this is only for the worst cases.“ Danny shook his head without looking at his younger brother. Albert grinned.
„Everything would be okay with this power. Does it really bother you that I might be killed by a monster somewhere off without you knowing?“
„Albert...“
„Like this.“ Albert pulled out Attack Vent from the deck. It summons the Gigazella commanding a herd of other zella monsters. They all are Advent Beasts of Kamen Rider Spear.
„Let's do it, bro!“
„Albert...“
Danny walked over to Albert and punched him without any warning. „Ouch!“ Albert's body flopped on the couch and his head hit the wall behind it with a nasty hollow thud. „It's up to me if we murder that bastard!“ „Fine! If you don't like it, we can just starve to death!“ „Brothers? What's wrong?“ The two turned around to see Jessica. „Nothing. Go to sleep.“ Albert put on a fake smile. „I was asleep, but I heard some loud noise. Did anything happen?“ „No, no. Danny?“ „Oh no, it's nothing. I was just relaying a story. It's called The Old Man and the Sea... I think?“ Albert picked it from here. „I read it too. It's about a captain, whose family was killed by a whale so he spends his life hunting that whale.“ „I think you've got it mixed up.“ Jessica muttered, only somewhat placated. The brothers sighed collectively and looked at the each other. Alarm rung only for them.
„Close.“
„Closer.“
Jessica looked at their suddenly serious faces. „Do you want to check the place, just in case?“ „We can't even go anywhere ... Jessica, we'll be out for a moment.“ „Now? It's midnight.“ „Lock the door properly and sleep tight.“ They went to get their jackets and leave the house when Jessica stopped them and handed them both something wrapped up in handkerchiefs.
„What is it?“
„lunch...“
When Danny unwrapped the package, a small sandwich peeked out. „Sorry, both of you haven't been eating much recently, so I prepared this for tomorrow morning. I haven't got any more resources.“ Albert patted Jessica on head. „It's awesome.“ Danny gave her a tiny smile. „Let's go.“ Danny promised himself to hold on the sandwich. „Take care.“ Jessica waved after them.

Now that Richie's fate was uncertain, No Men's HQ had the atmosphere of a disaster relief team that got used to the catastrophe going on around them and gave up on giving up. Trent was up all night, spreading the range of their systems across the world and calling for response that never came. „It seems that Richie is gone.“ „Start looking for the Cho brothers.“ „Who else do we have?“
Agent Phillips looked at Michelle, who looked down on her feet. „JTC.“ „Only Len and Kit any otherwise?“ Phillips nodded. Len left his spot leant against a wall and walked into their line of sight. „There is no other way. We have to bring in JTC.“ „You serious?“ Kit asked, throwing his hands up. „He is no better than Xaviax.“
That may have been true through the War, when JTC was Xaviax' right hand. His last fight against Len broke his mind and he was vented right after. He was placed into a secure psychiatric ward after being out pulled out of Advent Void. There he supposedly spent his time in memories of his family. No signs of recovery through the past year. Kit recalled JTC's creepily innocent eyes. „It's dangerous, but we can't wait until the contact with Ventara is reestablished.“ „Guess not.“ Len took Strike Deck and prepared to go through a mirror. „Wait, Len...“ „There is no time, Phillips.“ „We have to arrange for the visit and... it would be better if Kit went anyway. If JTC saw you it wouldn't help anyone.“ „I can't do it... for Maya.“ „It's the decision of No Men. As a rider, you have to obey, Kit.“ „Stop messing around!“ Kit resisted Philips' pressure. „I ... Riders are not your tools!“ „I know.“ Philips knew that Kit is not tough enough to stare someone down while looking up. „To be honest, I am not sorry. You can hate me, you can hit me, but it would be better if you took it out on monsters.“ Kit looked Philips in the eye once more before taking the deck from Len and leaving silently.

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It had the same feeling like hospital. Staff wore scrubs and the smell of disinfection hung in the air. Something was off, though. The rooms had no space for guests and not all personnel was of the medical sort judging by their uconcealed firearms. It reminded of the closed off hospital wing, where Frank Taylor was kept after Xaviax drained him and left him comatose. „Dad ...“ Kit regretted sending his father to the ceremony. He could only believe he is safe in Ventara. After all, if they can't go there, then hopefully neither can monsters. Nevertheless, loneliness has been slowly creeping into his heart. He just wanted to get this over with and reunite with his family, both related and found.
Kit looked at the door nametag door bitterly. One deep breath and then there was nothing else left to do than to knock on the door.
„Come in.“ The inside of the room looked much more like a normal hospital room than the rest of the place. Apart from the metal grid on the window, that is. JTC was sitting on the bed, flipping through a comic magazine. He still had the same innocent expression as the last time Kit saw him. „James?“ He looked up. „And you are, buddy?“ „Kit Taylor. I guess you don't remember me. We used to play and this was our toy.“ Kit pulled the Strike deck out of his pocket and offered it to JTC. It only prompted the former hacker to rub his neck and tilt his head in confusion. „I don't remember.“ He turned away. „Daddy, when will you come? I want to play, but Billy is not here. It's boring.“ „Billy?“ „I'm waiting for you and dad, but doctors don't want me to leave hospital. They don't believe I am fine.“ His eyes have stared off to somewhere far away behind the window's metal grid. It was so harmless and calm that no matter how inevitable that move was, Kit couldn't bring himself to press the deck into James' hand. He sighed deeply. „Oh, brother? You here?“ „Sorry, brother will go outside for a moment. Should I buy something to drink?“ „Orange juice, please.“ „OK.“ Kit put the deck on the desk and left the room.
When he came back, JTC was lying on the bed, eyes closed. „Why did you fall asleep?“ Kit muttered and smiled, watching the peaceful expression. „OK, I'll come again.“ He put the juice on the table and picked up

the deck. „Kit Taylor ...“ JTC whispered. „Oh sorry, I woke you up. Yeah, it's Kit Taylor, remember? I'll go home now.“ JTC sat up on the bed and opened his eyes that shone with inner light. Even now, he still had a fearless smile. „It's been a long time, Kit Taylor.“ JTC got off the bed and walked over to Kit before laughing and taking the deck from him. „Why did you come? Tell me.“ Kit resisted the urge to step away. That cold curiosity made his feet tremble. Snakes hypnotize their prey with that stare. „Oh screw you.“ Kit sat down in a chair. „Whatever. I'll do it.“ „What ... why?“ „I need power of the Riders and No Men.“ „Power?“ „To change the world ... Oops, no need to tell you more.“ That's what Kit remembered. Frustrating gloating. Lot of talk, little importance. „Well then, let's go. I'll have to lead the way because you don't know anything anyway.“ „I know. Just a let me think for a moment.“ „No moment. Drink your juice and move it.“ JTC went for the mirror and turned to Kit. „By the way, how is Maya?“ Kit glared at him. „You don't have any right to say her name! Don't ever get close to her again!“ „What a pity.“ „Do you even understand how much you hurt her?!“ JTC laughed sarcastically and followed Kit into the mirror.

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„This is the situation of the past month. Monster attacks have been increasing steadily.“ Trent pressed something on the keyboard, bringing up a different image. Map of Los Angels littered with red dots. „This is how we keep track of the attacks.“ The dots concentrated in a single area. „I see.“ JTC nodded. He was briefed on the situation after arriving at No Men's HQ.

His arrival has attracted general attention of the agents gathered regardless of whether they recognized him or not. „Is that the legendary hacker?“ „Yeah...“ „*That* kid?“ „I was deceived by his looks earlier too.“ Stuart and Phillips made watching the show more enjoyable for themselves by standing around and sipping coffee.

„Activity in this area is centered around three points. The nest is probably around here. We didn't get to it yet.“ „Wonderful, Men In Black.“ JTC muttered mockingly, but his eyes stayed fixed at the monitor. Alarm resounded through the headquarters closely followed by the surveillaince systems going off. „It's two places at once!“ „Kit, Len...“ „Yeah. Len, let's go.“ „What about JTC?“ „Well, why don't you play with me again after such a long time?“ JTC stepped next to Kit, looking for trouble. „Hey, why with me?“ „Bats are fine on their own.“ „It'll be easier with someone to help you.“ „So the story is decided. Can we go?“

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Kit and JTC stepped out of a full length mirror left off to the side from an elevator exit. Two blue monsters covered in blades stood there. They were Raydragoons, evolved Sheerghosts. „They have molted already!“ „So a warm up coming up?“ JTC thrust his hand holding the Strike deck out. Kit followed his lead. Belts appeared and the buckles opened. „Kamen Rider!“ They shouted before setting the decks in. Two spheres of light, red and purple respectively, wrapped around them and lit up the dark room. The lights turned around and wrapped them in armor.

Strike cracked his neck, making Kit's hair stand at the ends and his stomach twist with fear. It didn't matter whether he was fighting with JTC or against him. It was still the sound of nightmares. „We'll do this one on one.“ „Well, why not make a bet who can defeat both?“ „Stop kidding around!“ Dragon Knight summoned his Sword Vent and jumped to fight the monster. „Hey, don't you know only losers rush in?“ Strike slowly took a card out of the deck and set it in the snake head of his cane-type Veno Visor. **Sword Vent**

A drill shaped sword resembling the tail of a rattlesnake, Veno Saber, appeared. One of the Raydragoons lost interest in Dragon Knight, attacked Strike and was swiftly sent flying. „Great!“

Dragon Knight barely avoided being hit by the monster and yelped a little in surprise. The monster got up and attacked again. „Man!“

The monsters took off to the sky and started their aerial assault. „Be careful!“ However, Strike dodged that and hit the monster's back and behind. The monster rammed its body into Strike. Then a cobra appeared and bit into it midair. The Raydragoon fought to break free. „Struggling, huh? It won't be long anymore.“ Venosnaker shook its head and spat the monster on the ground. Strike set a card into the visor. **Final Vent**

Strike jumped up and Venosnaker rose behind him. „Ha ha!“ Stream of energy and venom shot from the cobra's mouth and fired Strike at the monster in a high kick attack. The monster exploded and Strike landed on the ground lightly. He turned his head to look at Dragon Knight. „Would you like me to help you fight tomorrow?“ „No!“ Kit kicked the monster he was fighting and initiated his own Final Vent. Dragredder twisted around Dragon Knight and together they delivered a burning kick, wreathing the remaining monster in flames.

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„It was too weak. Not worth playing with.“ „He calls it playing!“
Kit and JTC came out of the mirror in No Men's HQ. Apparently, Len had not returned yet. „Well, I guess I should return to my cell then.“ „Michelle, is the computer ready?“ „Yes.“ JTC was given a room in No Men's HQ so they could keep him under supervision. He agreed to under one condition. He wanted a computer. Phillips disagreed, but was forced to admit defeat and let JTC have the computer as long as they can monitor his activities. The rules were "*Don't take physical or electronic copies of the information you have browsed.*", "*Prioritize your duties as a rider.*" and "*Personal curiosity has to be kept down.*" „OK, then.“ Trent's cell phone rang. It informed of an incoming message. Trent checked it. He looked at JTC as he was leaving and back at the phone. „That adress...“ „What's wrong?“ „No, nothing.“ Cold sweat came up at Trent's back.

BURNING DETERMINATION

Two figures were sneaking through the dim alleys. Gang activities intensified every day. It was revolting even to watch from the distance. Scrapping together some living was harder than ever. There just wasn't enough to eat, not even for the children. The Cho brothers didn't think about stealing again, but desperation forced them to take that risk. It was useless to try through the day, but nighttime offered some choices.
To steal from the gangs. To die if caught.
Mirror travel couldn't save one after getting shot.
There wasn't even anything worth stealing this evening. „No, Danny..." „We have to go on. There is no other way." „This is Bean's territory..." Albert looked around carefully before the brothers dived into a narrow backalley. „Hey, wait!" Their faces turned towards the man speaking with the same anger and bitterness. „Danger!" „The Cho Brothers!" They became surrounded by groups of tattooed men, who had appeared as suddenly as if they materialized from thin air.
„Albert, run!"
„Wait, bastards!"
Dozens of angry voices echoed from behind the fleeing brothers. They blocked the narrow alley with garbage as they passed. The pursuers stomped on stacked cardboard and pushed past bottle cases thrown in their way.
Ground exploded at Danny's feet.
„They brought guns!"
„Mirror, mirror, something reflective....." The dark alleyways didn't offer any means of escaping besides running. „Damn it!" Danny stopped and listened. „Danny!" „Damn... I know!" Albert stopped for long enough to catch the monster alarm too. Pressed between monsters and gangs, the brothers ran desperately. Danger gang followed them into a lifeless parking lot. „Well look at who is irresponsible today." „Uhh..." Bean stretched his muscles before aiming the handgun their way.
„This is the end..." Danny muttered.
The windshield of the car behind Bean rippled and a blue monster burst out of it.
„OH!?" „Help!" Mass of arms sprouted from the mirror surface, picking of the gang members one after another and dragging them in. „We're saved!" Albert shout joyfully. Danny looked at him. „Good riddance, bastards!" „Well, shouldn't we go help them?" „Fine! Just so you wouldn't feel bad about leaving them to die..." „It could earn us some benefits, don't you think?" Energy sparkled from decks and wrapped around their waists. Belts appeared and decks were inserted at the same time. „Kamen Rider!"
Force fields spread from the belt and wrapped around them. Scrap paper and garbage were blown away by the energy released.
Transformed, they jumped into the car's windshield.

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They arrived into industrial complex with storage tanks, noon sun shining in the sky. They left Earth at night, but this also seemed to be the real deal. „Where are they?" „Albert, over here!" Axe pointed above the gas tank. The number of monsters gathered there was staggering.
Something fell down. „Uh." It used to be a hand. A familiar hand with many rings. Their faces were stamped by those rings just a few days ago. „Bean!" „It's too late..." „Damn, monster ate a monster, huh?" Spear inserted Spin Vent card into the visor and a spear imitating gazelle's horns attached to his hand. He climbed up the tank, interrupting the monster's meal. „Alright!" Spear slashed with the Gazella Stab, cutting down rows of monsters. „Watch this!" Axe set his Strike Vent in and equipped himself with huge tiger paws – Dest Claws. Then, he summoned his tiger Advent Beast Destwilder. Appearing among monsters, it went on stabbing and throwing them for Axe to finish off.

Spear caught up with Axe. They didn't find anything but blood, pieces of flesh and bone fragments. „Last one!“ Monster spread its wings. „You're not going anywhere!“ Spear set a card into the visor on his right foot. **Final Vent**

Group of gazella monsters were summoned and swarmed the blue monster all at once in attack called Drive Divider. Spear followed to finish them off.

Monster was kicked into one of the tanks and exploded. The tank caught on fire, which soon spread to other tanks, inciting more explosions. „Albert! What have you done?!“ „Sorry, bro!“ The place was quickly turning in a fiery hell. The brothers fled into the mirror they came from. „Damn!“

They rolled out of the car window into the parking lot. Their armors dissipated into light. „That was risky ...“ „Yeaaah...“ Danny and Albert kept breathing heavily. „Oh man, this is serious...“ „They will definitely think we killed Bean.“ Their breath calmed down and a wave of anxiety started to well up. Those dragged into mirror won't return. Bean disappeared when pursuing them. His gang will think they hid the corpses somewhere. Revenge is going to be bloody. „Gangs, monsters, riders ... Everything is going great.“ „It got out of hand, didn't it?“ Albert looked at Danny's face. His brother stayed silent, looking up at the starless night sky.

Several days later, JTC was still cooperating without any problems. „JTC, did you analyze the data we requested?“ „Done and gathered for the report.“ Stuart told him to start before looking at the computer deep in thought. „I analyzed the monster appearances in different periods of time.“ JTC pointed at the map on the monitor. „They are leaving this area and migrating here.“ JTC flipped to a different picture with a click. It was a line graph showing the number of monster appearance in relation to time. „There haven't been many attacks downtown yet, but the numbers are rising steeply. Conversely, the usual areas have gone cold turkey. We should focus on this one.“
„I see ...“ All eyes were on JTC. „The data are everchanging. They move every day. I need fresh batch to make an up to date statement.“ „Truly a former genius hacker.“ Stuart praised JTC and patted him on the shoulder. It went without a reaction. JTC only pointed at a different spot on the map. „If you attack this spot, perhaps you can actually do some damage.“ „So it is.“ „They are gathering in a single place. But why?“ The news uplifted the morale among agents anyway. „Wait a minute. Union Station is here, Chinatown is here ...“ Kit moved over the map and magnified the resulting area. „It's just a stone's throw from Dodger's stadium.“ „That's bad. If monsters appear during game, mass panic will ensue. We can't deal with that.“ „When is the next home game?“ „The day after tomorrow!“ „Bad. Very bad. We have to hurry.“ „We have to use this oppurtunity.“ The agents went after their bussines. Only Trent remained, his face strained. „What's up, Trent?“ JTC looked at Trent expectantly. „Umm... JTC, I need to talk to you about something.“ „Let's get some coffee first, OK?“ Alarm ripped into their conversation. „Let's go, JTC. It's where you said it is.“ „No, I won't go.“ „Eh?“ „I'm tired. Don't you know just how many times I had to sort something out through the past few days? I'm going to lie down for a while. Call me if you need support.“ „Fine, let's go.“ „Leave him alone. Survey comes first.“ Kit and Len jumped into the mirror. „Are you sure?“ „Nevermind. Your story comes first.“ They entered the break room. JTC picked up a coffee pot, filled his mug, smelled the fragrance a little and smiled. „Only good beans. Do you want some?“ He pointed the coffee pot at Trent. „Oh... I'm good. The thing from before. Why do you have this?“ Trent pulled his cell phone out of the pocket. He fiddled with it for a moment to find the e-mail he got from JTC in the evening the day before. It was hard to believe its contents. „I think there is no need to investigate such things...“ JTC took a sip from his cup slowly before speaking. „I'll tell you this, Trent. If you don't trust James Trademore, that's fine by me, but if you can trust JTC, don't let anyone what you know, right?“ „ ...“ JTC stood up and patted Trent's slumped shoulders couple times. „Watch out for grass snakes.“ „What?“ „Just tell Kit when you've got the chance. Now, shall we go?“ „Where are you going?“ „Taking a little walk.“ JTC muttered over the shoulder before leaving the break room.

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Old forgotten building stood in the downtown area, close to the LA City Hall. Dragon Knight and Wing Knight have cleared the monster nest in basement already, but some monsters escaped. „It's gonna suck, but we have to chase them. There might be another nest in Third reality.“ Wing Knight nodded and followed Dragon Knight.
Strike approached a mirror from the other side, watching the Knights in its reflection. A shadow fell on the mirror. „Well, well, well, if it's not the "Rider Hunter".“ Strike slowly turned around. Another Wing Knight stood behind him. „I figured out you can turn into other riders. There is no other way you could have overpowered so many of them.“ „I noticed you as well.“ „You count with three tired riders. I can't speak for the Cho brothers, but it still means you have to hurry before the connection with Ventara is restored. It's a better to oneshot a roach nest rather than to fight individuals.“ „Well, it would be easier, but I am fine with this. Nobody trusts you and the Cho brothers are useless anyway.“ „I know all your moves.“ „Do you know about this, too?“ „What ...!?“ Pain blossomed on Strike's back. He turned around.

Three more Wing Knights reflected in his visor.
Three Wing Lancers stabbed him in unison. „Trick Vent... What a stupid thing, to copy cards.“ „Ha, just like a birthday cake.“ Wing Knight was watching from the reflection in front of Strike. „Oh my... Len ... No way, you too!?“ A shadow clone pulled its Wing Lancer out of Strike and disappeared. Strike crumbled into broken heap on the concrete floor. „Farewell, JTC. It was short, but you did your job well.“ Strike's body started to disintegrate into light particles washed away into the darkness. „Kit ...“ Strike was surrounded by specs of light like fireflies at the end of summer. He reached out to Dragon Knight beyond the mirror with a shaking, translucent hand. „Be careful, there are snakes in the grass.“ Strike's body disappered. Another Wing Knight picked up the remaining deck and starred at Dragon Knight running about in the reflection. Eventually, he turned around and left.

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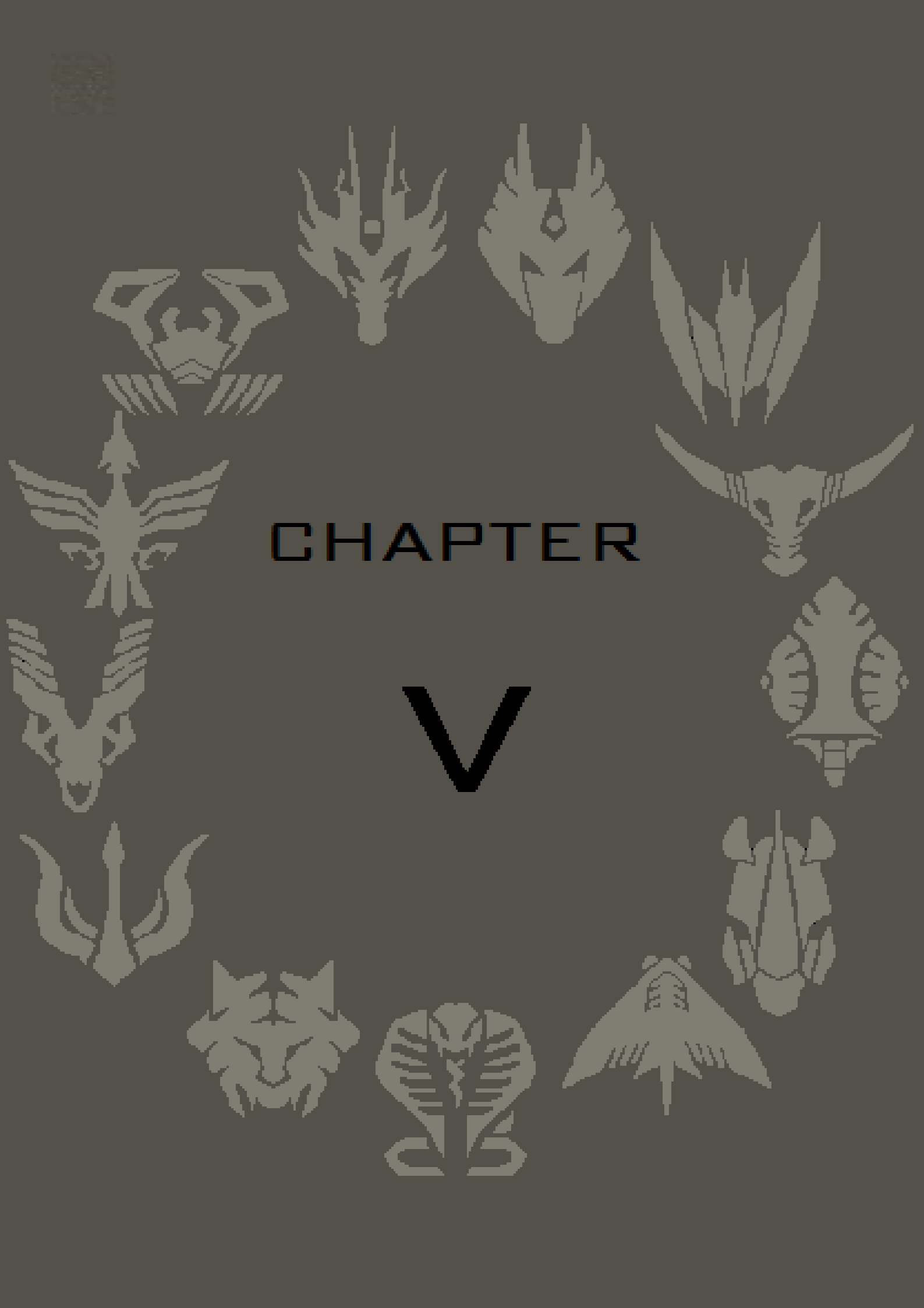
Kit sat at the center of No Men's HQ with his head down. No matter what they did, JTC' whereabouts have been unknown for half a day already. Kit looked up and saw Trent fidgeting. The moment he tried to get up, the wall mirror's surface rippled and two men walked in. „It's kind of bad.“ „We've got to do this.“ That voice made Kit jump. „Cho brothers?!“ „Sup, dragon boy. Long time no see. Where is macho and the other riders?“ „Len is on the move and everyone else has been vented.“ „ And where is this anyway?“ „Let me explain.“ Philips walked up to the Cho Brothers.
There were only four riders and three decks left. The Knights, Axe and Spear. Onyx, Siren, Wrath. The four guards protecting Earth, fighting masses of monsters. This was all too weird a talk for Danny. He was not sure if it really was as serious as presented. „So here it comes. We will be in a team with macho and brat. Yeah, of course, bastards.“ There was no way they would take this seriously. „Being selfish is not an option. You have to follow the orders of No Men and participate in rider operation.“ Stuart's words stung. „We don't feel like working with you.“ „Don't forget about the reward.“ Cho Brothers answered that by heading off into the mirror. „We don't have any other choice but to bear with them.“ Michelle watched Phillips' desperate effort to stay calm cheekily.
„Umm, Kit?“ „Trent, what's wrong?“ „Not here.“ Trent pulled Kit to the break room. He looked around vigilantly before handing Kit a small envelope. Kit looked inside and his eyes widened. „What's this?“ „JTC entrusted it to me.“ „He did?“ „Do you know why he worked with Xaviax?“ „No.“ „His younger brother has been unfairly imprisoned.“ „Brother, huh?“ Kit remembered his conversation with JTC in the hospital. „I looked into the police database. Records are sparse and investigation was only done for the sake of being done. It seems that JTC became anti-social and cynnical afterwards. He sought power and so was drawn to computers, internet and conspiracies. Maybe... he used to a decent person. I think there is some meaning to what he told me, Kit. It was "Watch out for grass snakes". „That's what he said?“ „Yeah.“ „Kit?“ He didn't answer and left the break room.



CHAPTER

V

FOR SOMEONE

The abandoned house that the Cho Brothers lived at was filled with children's voices long into the night. Danny and Albert were annoyed and tired from having to antagonize the all too energetic children. Danny read them a picture book and another and another and then just got sick of it.
He asked Albert about Jessica. „It's not that late.“ Albert was playing horsey with the four years old Jeff, their youngest child. „You can't send us to sleep yet! You come so rarely and we want to be with you!“ Jessica would usually take care of the children now that the brothers were busy fighting, but the children were too lively and wanted to play forever. Jessica needed the break.
„Hey, it's ten o'clock already ... oh no...“ High pitched sound shrieked in their ears. „Danny...“ „Yeah.“ They stood up and overlooked the children anxiously. „Guys, turn off the lamps, get in the bed and don't go out until we come back or Jessica returns.“ „Steve, you are the oldest after Jessica. You're in charge if she is not around.“ Albert patted the ten years old Steve on the head. „Alright ... Be careful.“ „Let's go.“ Cho brothers quietly left the house. „Where are you ...“

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The duo quietly advanced through the night, covering each other's back. Albert caught sight of something shining in the darkness and poked Danny in the shoulder to notify him. Danny looked what his brother was pointing at. An old fashioned television layed on the street, otherworldy shadow flickering in its glass front.
„Look!“ „Damn!“ They saw a red monster holding a human shaped figure. Trapped by the monster's grip was a young girl. „Jessica!“ „Let her go!“ Danny and Albert took out their decks and struck out their hands in unison. „Kamen Rider!“ Light poured from the decks as they were inserted in the buckles.
When the transformation was complete, the duo jumped into the television.
It was connected to a place like some kind of industrial facility. Huge tank and machinery were closely spaced with barely any room between them. Small pipes run vertically and horizontally. There were many blind spots among nooks and cranies created just for ambushes. „Leave it to me!“ Spear pulled out a card and set it in the visor. ATTACK VENT Dozens of zellas appeared behind him. „Look around!“ Spear ordered. The monsters spread out.
A while after, they heard a struggle and monstrous screams close by. „C'mon!“ They arrived just in time to see one zella monster to fall under a sword.
„You!“
It was Wing Lancer.
„This is your fault!“ „Hey macho, you saw a red monster holding a girl? She is with us. Answer!“ Wing Knight shrugged, just like the shadows behind him. „A girl like this one?“ Wing Knight gestured and a Minion appeared from behind him with Jessica in tow. Her eyes were closed, but she appeared to be alive.
„You bastard!“ „No way, monster and a rider!?“ „I thought that had stopped long ago. Why?!“ „Oh well, I was going to recover the decks with brute force anyway.“ „What did you say?!“ „That rider must fulfill their "work".“ „We're fighting monsters like we've been told!“ Wing Knight shook his head. „It's about means to something, not the purpose... not that I could tell you anyway. Your fight is a nuisaince and we can't have you get in the way. So, I decided to make you disappear.“ „You'll choke on that!“ Axe and Spear pulled out cards in unison. „Oops, I think there is a hostage for that.“ Wing Knight starred at Jessica hanging in monster's arms. „Will you go down quietly?“ „Screw you, dirty loser.“ „Whatever you say. What are you going to do? Abandon her and go back to being little villainous brothers?“ Wing Knight took Dark Visor and turned towards Jessica's face. Axe's hand holding a card trembled with anger and hesitation.
He returned the card into the deck slowly. „Brother...“
„So we have the winner. I'll make it short.“ Wing Knight pulled out Survive card from the deck. The wind picked up and started to swirl around him. The Dark Visor changed into a bat themed shield/sword combo

attached to his left arm. When he inserted the card in the visor, a gust of wind wrapped around him and Wing Knight's armor changed into gold and blue. The advanced form, Survive Mode. „Please, Jessica...“ Wing Knight kicked Axe to make him kneel and pulled out a card. **Shooting Vent**
The visor changed into a bowgun and laser shots bit Axe's body. It started to lean forward, devoid of the strength keeping it upright. „Danny!“ Spear ran over to Axe.
Sword Vent
Wing Knight pulled the sword of his visor and brought it down on Spear's back, who trembled for a moment before stopping to move alltogether. Their bodies collapsed like folded papers and were enveloped in light. Slowly, they started to disintegrate.
„Danny...“
„Albert ...“
Wing Knight watched Axe and Spear quietly as they melted into thin air. When they disappeared completely, he detransformed and overlooked the two decks rolling on the floor. The Minion still holding Jessica poked him in the shoulder and let out a sound from deep in its throat. It compared Jessica and Len's face, apparently complaining about him detransforming. „Well ...“ Len smiled a little, shrugged and hit the monster. „Go back to other stupid bastards!“ The monster chittered and jumped in the reflection of a nearby pipe, taking Jessica with it. Len sighed, picked up the decks and starred at them for moment before shaking his head and putting them away.

„Len...“ The man in question turned around in surprise. „What have you done...“ „Kit?“ „Answer!“ The younger rider's fist trembled. „What did you do to the Cho Brother?! Answer!“ He took out the deck silently. „Len ...“ He extended his hand and let energy create his belt. „If you want to listen, come with me.“ „Why ... Why, why!“ Kit also thrust out his deck. „Kamen Rider!“ The two cried out simultaneously and transformed.

Sword Vent

Dragon Knight took up DragSaber and Wing Knight took up Wing Lancer. They dashed at each other. Sparks flied from their clashing blades. „What's wrong with you, Len!“ „I... am sorry. I am not him.“ „What?!“ „My name is Brian Mace.“ „No way...“ „Len hasn't come back from Ventara. With all the riders trapped and the connection jammed, I was able to replace him.“ Dragon Knight aimed at a gap in the other rider's defense, but was swiftly kicked back. He bent over and stumbled away. „You've been deceived for so long. Does it hurt?“ „No, the opposite actually.“ „What?“ „Because I found out you are not Len. I've been worried that he has betrayed me. Looking back, there were some hints. You said you came back from Ventara, ... but you didn't need to. Then you didn't remember the twings that Chris showed us.... I've been suspicious for a long time.“ „Oh, I see.“

Brian clapped sarcastically. „Brian, I taught you about riders.“ „Don't tell me what I know ... come out, Colonel Stuart!“ Stuart appeared from nowhere. „Supreme, Mister Dragon Knight ... well noticed...“ „Colonel!“ Wing Knights kept Dragon Knight away as he was trying to approach Stuart. „For the record, when did you get suspicious about me?“ „Trent told me JTC hacked your records. You retired last year and lied about coming from weapon department.“ Dragon Knight pulled himself out of Wing Knight's grasp and glanced at him. „Also, I knew that our enemy can turn into riders to ambush them. Drew told me.“ Dragon Knight played a message from his cellphone. „Kit? I'll tell you something nice since you believed in me. I don't know who is our enemy, but he can turn into other riders. I didn't know he was watching, but then he appeared in form of Torque. That's just the start. So... if I go down, search for the rest. Don't trust anyone. Enemies may be near.“ Dragon Knight turned it off.

„JTC said "Be careful, there are snakes in the grass." I was convinced that with you and the impersonator, there was still another enemy among us. I've been trying to figure it out, but I've never thought that he was disguised as Len.“ „I see.“ Stuart also applauded. „I see that you can collect all your strength and move on. But this world can't be saved. Entrust the deck to me. Create a greater power that can save it.“ „Just what...“ „You still don't understand!“ Stuart scoffed. His emotional shift was jarring. „Advent Decks are dangerous! Just one can be a human weapon comparable to single division. It markedly damages the balance between Earth and Ventara! If Ventaran government directed all riders to Earth, they could conquer Earth!“ „People of Ventara wouldn't do that.“ „How can you say so? They are beings of another world. It's alien and absurd to believe in them. Even more so when we fight among each other.“ „You said you understand Master Eubulon!“ „You truly have to be green if you can be deceived so easily. I have never said more than a few words to him. What a counterproductive meassure, trying to understand aliens.“ „What a guy!“ „Unlike Earth, there is a unified government in Ventara. They have rider decks. Is their military not armed with advanced scientific knowledge?“ Stuart pointed at Dragon Knight. „We can take the decks from Ventara, solve the world's conflict at once and create a peaceful society. Our United States will guide the world with massive military power. With an established system, we can fight off any invasion from Ventara.“ „You were going to use the decks as a tool of war after all!“ „Don't speak to me like that! This is a sacred mission to acquire the power to realize true peace... You don't know... the hell I saw on the front lines of Afganistan, Kuwait, Iraq... all before you were even born... The pride I had facing dictators and terorists as part of "world police". US Army continued through a despicable resistance in the desert. The remnants of patriots and prestige were dragged through mud.“ A vein popped up on his temple as he shook with anger. „Now United States and the US military can reign over Earth!“ „I won't use the power just for single country or single person no matter what you say.“ „So, I will take your power away like with all the other riders!“ „What?!“

Stuart took out Onyx deck. „You shouldn't be able to use it!“ „Do not understimate me. We have finished analyzing the technology already. We used the battle data accumulated to duplicate it and create strongest corps. Redundant meassure like DNA lock were removed.“ „Battle data?! That's what you did to Chris?!“ „Yes, the problem was that Ventaran riders had decks on themselves, but we managed to steal them by using the ceremony as a cover. It was a blessing, just like the oppurtunity to find Brian. God must have helped me and the world.“ Stuart's face drifted off into a dreamy expression. „If you fight and accumulate data on your deck, it can be handed over to the next user without any drop in fighting power. They made circumstances to gather the earth riders and get completed decks!“ „No way, the increase in monsters attacks...“
As Stuart's eyes lit up with a suspicious light, he grinned and said: „Yes, it's me who let them remember the taste of human flesh!“ „That's crazy!“
Stuart extended his hand with the deck. „Kamen Rider!“ Flash of light covered him in armor. He became Onyx, Dragon Knight's black version. **Copy Vent**
Onyx changed to Torque. „That's the secret... You've never said you have that much hands on approach.“ „Imitating cards is easy.“ Stuart set in another card. **Shoot Vent**
Giga Cannon appeared on Torque's shoulders. „Destroy everything!“ „Colonel! Wait a moment!“ Wing Knight was caught in the weapon's firing range. „The decks are a new weapon developed by our army. All those who know their origin must begone. Brian, your mission is over, but rest assured, I will remember your name forever!“
Giga Cannon fired, aiming at the Knights. Massive explosion covered the area with smoke and dust.
Sun light shone through the smoke screen, illuminating Dragon Knight as he shielded himself and Wing Knight from the attack. „Kit, why did you...“ He stood his ground even while panting from exhaustion. „I gave up on giving up. Resistance is not futile... Chris fought for the coutry's pride, so I should do my best for the world, shouldn't I?“
Torque changed back to Onyx. „What you're doing is wrong. Soldier sacrifices civilians for the sake of their cause! That is the honor of the strongest corps!“ Onyx said grandiously. „It's an honor to sweep your stupid ideas off this world!“ „I am not afraid of pursuing them!“ „Oh, just shut up.“ Onyx set card in visor. Steal Vent appeared in his hand. „I couldn't imitate Survive card, so I had to wait until you could use it.“ „What?!“ Dragon Knight touched his Advent Buckle quickly. „Not you.“ Onyx held Wing Knight's Survive card. Wing Knight looked at it and stepped in front of Dragon Knight. „Kit, he borrowed it.“ „Brian...“ „You betrayed me!“ „Are you serious? It's you who have betrayed me. You were just an end-line bouncer and I gave you a chance to be a hero, a name in history! You can't understand!!“ „I understand that your followers will be left behind someday well enough. You lied. I cooperated to eliminate conflicts and terrorism, not to create militant country capable of controlling the world.“ „What an extraordinary resistance ... but it can't stop me anyway.“ Onyx' dragon head shaped Visor deformed and became a dragon head shaped beam gun. He inserted the Survive card.
Black wind spun around him and colored the armor black and silver. „Well, let's try the power of the Survive Mode.“ Onyx called up Dragblacker to burn the place to the ground. „Crap!“ Fire was tearing the factory from the inside out. Massive explosion went off all around. The shock wave has thrown Dragon Knight and Wing Knight against a building. „Shoot!“ They managed to outrun the following wave and escape outside, but not away from Onyx.
The dragon's shadow pursued them across a grassland. Dragon Knight pulled out his own Survive card and inserted it in DragVisor Zwei. Roaring flames wrapped around him and evolved his armor into the gold and crimson Survive Mode. „Let's go, Brian!“
Three warriors crashed in a chaos of motion and noise. Dragon Knight switched Drag Visor Zwei to blade mode and Wing Knight took up the Wing Lancer. They attacked Onyx in unison. A barely avoided punch made the bat rider stumble back. „Brian!“ „Look where you are going!“ Onyx punched Dragon Knight in the face and kicked him in a quick succesion, causing to him to fall and roll away. Wing Knight jumped over Dragon Knight lying on the ground, attacked Onyx and was interrupted by a sharp shot from the visor. Onyx followed up with turning the visor into blade mode and stabbing at falling Wing Knight. „Stop!“

Dragon Knight launched at Onyx and caught his hand before striking with a high kick. However, Onyx deflected the kick with his hand. No other attempts were better played.
Onyx knocked Dragon Knight across the place with a powerful kick. Crashing into a wall, the dragon rider returned to his default form. „Ha ha!“ Onyx stepped on fallen Wing Knight's back. „See. This is the difference between a pro and an amateur... No, it is the difference between the patriotic hero who was chosen by God like me and you, who are no more than dust!“
„... stop...“ Dragon Knight reached out desperately, unable to move. Wing Knight wringgled under the armored boot weakly.
Despair clouded up everything and made them miss the moment a nearby glass pane started shining and rippling. A man after man and woman came out of the portal between dimensions. Kit felt like if he was dreaming. „Colonel Stuart, honor the US military and stop this madness.“ Chris Ramirez shook his head sadly. „If you cheat, you'll lose in the homestretch.“ „Brad Barrett!“ „You took me in by suprise, but it's time for second round!“ „You'll pay for Jessica!“ „Cho Brothers will show you hell!“ „Let's wrap this up so I can go back to work“ „A hero doesn't try to become a hero.“ „Everyone, how?“ „Kit, sorry for the wait.“
„Drew!“ „We're here too!“ Kase and Eubulon also stepped out. „Good job, Kit.“ „...Len!“ Len helped Kit stand up. Onyx laughed, picked Wing Knight up and flung him at Dragon Knight's feet. He detransformed, revealing Brian wincing in pain.
„Oh, right ... really the same.“ Kase compared Len and Brian as they met for the first time and sputtered in confusion. Brian was bruised all over and held the deck with a trembling hand. „Sorry, I didn't realize Stuart was such a guy.“ Len took the deck from Brian silently. „What I did was wrong, but please, I never hurt anyone else but riders.“ Len nods confidently. „I get that. Rest. I'll take it from here.“ He helped Brian up and sent him away. Onyx shook his head and burst into hysterical laughter. „There is no way that the space jamming would stop so soon.“ „I originally developed that technology. The modification made to it were too shoddy to hold on for very long.“ „You...“ Onyx apparently didn't appreaciate the remark. „OK, everyone together!“ Len, Chris, Brad, Grant, Drew, Richie, JTC, Danny, Albert, Kase and Vic thrust the decks out against Onyx.
„Kamen Rider!“ Eleven light spheres surrounded them, lighting up the place with the strength of another sun.
Eleven riders stepped beside Dragon Knight and closed a circle around Onyx. „Stuart, you can't win.“
But Onyx stood firm and apparently unfazed. „I will not give up. It is like a Christmas morning, but in a dessert, surrounded by guerillas and terrorists.“ He spun around, shooting laser beams from the visor. The riders scattered out of the way. „And this is my payback!“ Onyx set card in his visor.

Steal Vent

The card that appeared in hand of Onyx was...
„Dragon Knight's Survive card!“ „No way!“ „Don't! “ The Rider system has not been created for this!„ “Ha ha ha ha! I will reach the height that nobody has seen yet!„ Onyx chuckled and set the card into his visor.
„Wow!“
„What!?“
A whirlwind ripped through air, wrapped around Onyx and shot skyward into a tornado. Flames intertwined with the wind, turning the tornado into a vortex of fire. „What did you...“
„Ha ha!“
An eerie mockery of natural event, the burning tornado was gaining speed and strength, pushing the riders away.
Suddenly, it broke down and gradually dissipated.
A unknown rider stood in the circle of burning ground. His armor resembled Survive Mode, but it was bulkier and its gold shine was tainted with black tar and predatory feeling. Sharp angles and hard lines have emerged all over. A fearsome dragon head formed on the chest.
„Oh, for hell's sake!“ Axe attacked Onyx with Dest Claws equipped on both hands. However, Onyx flashstepped aside and knocked Axe away like ragdoll. „Ha ha!“ „Danny!“ Spear rushed over to pick Axe up.

Sting summoned Evildiver and flew at Onyx in highspeed, slashing him with Evil Whip. Onyx evaded all attacks. „What is this?“ He jumped up and kicked Sting off his Advent Beast. Sting fell down and landed ungraciously on his back. „Shut it!“ Torque fired from his visor. Onyx barely noticed being hit by all the shots, only turning his attention to the green rider as he rushed forward, grasped Torque's arm and twisted it. „Ow!“ „Drew!“ Incisor and Thrust came to his aid, but Onyx swung Torque around like a mace and knocked all three of them to the ground. „Great! Amazing! The power beyond the Survive Mode, the Oversurvive! The warlord of a superman unit forming the basis of the new US Army!“ Onyx' voice echoed. „Len, let's attack in unison!“ „OK!“ Wing Knight and Sirene slashed simultaneously, lodging their blades between the spikes of the black armor.
Onyx didn't budge.
„What!“
With both blades stuck in his shoulders, Onyx grabbed the rider duo by their necks and lifted them up. Then, he threw them overhead and away like unwanted dolls. „How about this!“ Strike summoned his Advent Beast. A huge cobra appeared, spitting venom at Onyx, who dashed between the shots. He answered with a spin kick to the cobra's head. It screamed and collapsed. Riders barely managed to avoid being crushed undernath. „Go, guys!“ Spear joined the zella herd's rush attack. Thrust and Camo followed suit. Onyx pulled another three cards out and inserted them in his visor.

Trick Vent

Shoot Vent

Sword Vent

„What!“ Onyx split into five figures right in front of them. Each wielded a sword with their right and Giga Launcher with their left hand. The five Onyxes turned against the three riders and twenty monsters, slashing, shooting and kicking away. Zellas were wiped out and riders torn down in fierce, dustclouds raising battle. „Well, that's just cheating...“ „That strength..“ „He is on a completely different level.“ „Ha ha ha ha! That's why I said it must match a hero! Now that you are all here, the party can start!“
Onyx vanished. „What?!“ Moving at tremendous speed, he reappeared in front of Dragon Knight. „First of all, you burned my hands. Take this!“ Onyx grabbed the dragon rider by neck and lifted him up. The black armor-clad fist punched him in the stomach repeatedly, making him scream in pain.
„Kit!“
The riders flocked in to help, but a two headed dragon dove from the sky, crashing in their way and breathing scorching wind.
„Wow!“ They were blown across the battlefield. „What an unexpected amount of power...“ Eubulon frowned and checked the Advent Key. His energy reserves were starting to run low after diving into Advent Void to get the riders out and fighting against such overhelming odds. Soon he would be forced out of transformation.
„Come on, Kit Taylor!“ „Die, sucker...“ Dragon Knight caught Onyx' fist. „Huh?“ Kicking off Onyx' torso, Dragon Knight broke free and set in a card. Dragredder circled behind and wreathed him in flames. Together they executed Dragon Rider Kick.
„Eat this!“ Dragon Knight's burning right leg pierced the monstrous face on Onyx' chest, setting his whole body ablaze. „Yeah!“
But Onyx regained his balance, took Dragon Knight by foot and threw him away. „What?!“ „I can't get through!“ „Ha ha ha ha! Excellent, really wonderful!“ Stuart triumphantly looked up to sky and laughed, surrounded by the burning battlefield and battered riders. „Let's finish this.“
Onyx walked over to Dragon Knight, watching him struggled to get up before swinging for one last punch.
„Die!“
At that moment, Onyx jerked as if struck by lightning. „What is happening?!“ „This.“
Onyx fell on his knees, surrounded by clouds of little explosions. His whole body broke, the armor crumbled into pieces like a cracked shell. „Why, why!“ Stuart yelled in surprise and looked at his hands. „The system has overheated.“ Eubulon said. „You overused the cloned cards and were too confident in your power and

careless about taking damage... I can't say victory is just about not giving up, Kit.“
„Well, I say what an idiot.“
Stuart tried to pick up the Onyx deck, but it opened and all the cloned cards flew out. They burst into flames and their ash was scattered by the wind.
„Oh .....“ Looking down at Stuart, Dragon Knight let out a heavy sigh. „Is it over?“ „No.“ Eubulon pointed to the forest line far back. Herds of monsters ran out and flooded the battlefield. „What's going on!“
„Monsters are gathering?!“ The riders put out a desperate fight against the massive onslaught.
But monsters didn't attack them.
„Stuart!?“
„Wait, you don't understand!“
Stuart desperately grasped the burned contract card and held it as a shield against the monsters. „Stop it, stop it!“ „You have signed up with all those monsters!“ „It's too many!“ Dragon Knight tried to reach him and stop the monsters, but was stopped himself by the evergrowing wall of their bodies. „Stop it, stop it! Ahhh!“
Bloodcurling screams rose from the center of the monster whirlpool with the sounds of meat being ripped from the bone and the blood being splattered on the ground. „That's what happens when you're engaged too times at the same time.“ Kit told Drew to shut up or throw up.

„Too bad...“ „So the rogue meets his end...“ „Anyway, we'll finish these monsters off and everything will be fine.“ However, monsters ignored them and continued swarming in confused patterns. „What about you guys? Lost the wind in your sails?“ Screams, chittering, ripping and tearing echoed among the hords. „Don't tell me they are cannibals?“ „There is something wrong going on. The swarm is growing bigger and bigger.“ The monster fused by dozens, creating bigger monsters that continued to merge with each other. „What are those things, Master Eubulon!?“ „I... don't know. It's not normal for mirror monsters to eat humans. Stuart have damaged them by overriding their basic instincts. They lost control and just started devouring each other.“ A huge monster thirty meters tall stood in front of them. Claws, feathers, tails, fangs and various other monster parts covered its body in nightmarish fusion. It slammed its giant fists down on them. „Wow!“ The rising dust clouds and shaking ground fell like heavy military bombarding. „You had enough! Don't eat us!“ „That's not going to happen. We'll have a game of speed!“ Sting struck from the air and Thrust from the ground. Wing Knight aimed his Final Vent at the monster's head. Its whole body was under heavy attack. „Alright!“ However, the wounds have scarred over and healed in no time at all. „What?!“ „Well, I can roast it then!“ Torque summoned his Advent Beast and prepared it for Final Vent. „And... action!“ The trigger was drawn and a enormous attack was released from Magnugiga's body, crashing into the giant monster like a tidal wave. Its scream shook the ground as explosions set it ablaze. Black smoke was blown away by wind, revealing its charred body. „Heh, easy victory.“ Torque was proud of himself. Neverthless, he celebrated prematurely. The monster's eyes shone mockingly and its outer skin fell off like a blister. „What!“ It shook off the remains of its dead outer layer, letting the riders see it has healed completely. „Wow, how did it...!?“ The monster waved its tail and shot heat rays from its mouth. Riders were blown back by the attack. „It can renegerate!“ „You can only say it's dead if there is nothing coming out of it!“ „It condensed the life force of all monsters, so it has practically limitless supply.“ Eubulon's statement provoked Siren to yell back. „That means we can't defeat it!“ „No, if it's a mass of energy, there have to be cores binding it together. Destroying the deepest one should be enough to defeat it.“ „How can we pull that off anyway? Torque's Final Vent can't even scratch it.“ „Damn! And now what!“ „Kit! We can use Survive Mode again now that Stuart is gone.“ Wing Knight pulled out his Survive card. „That's not enough.“ „What!? Why?!“ „Even the doubled strength of a Final Vent is not enough.“ The tail swung from overhead, causing them to crash into each other. „What do you want to do then!“ „Hand me the Onyx deck!“

„Why?“ „Kit! Use XR!“ Dragon Knight stopped shortly to listen to Master Eubulon. „What's that!?“ „It's a combination of Dragon Knight and Onyx' power. It should be enough.“ „But Adam is not here!“ „There is someone, who can use it.“ Dragon Knight saw Brian watching them from a far and threw him the deck. It hit him square in the chest. „Brian! You have to do it!“ Brian shook his head, his face paper white. „I can't do it. I am just a fake.“ „It's alright. Together we can do this!“ Kit called out to him with all his remaining strength. „You are an earth rider! Protect your world!“

„Protect the world...“ Brian's courage burned up. He took a strong stance and struck the deck out confidently. The jet black lightning reached out from the deck and created the belt buckle. Brian inserted the deck in, called out "Kamen Rider!" and became clad in black armor. „Everyone, cover Kit and Brian.“ The riders regrouped under Wing Knight's order and attacked the monster. Dragon Knight pulled out his Final Vent card. „Alright.“ They opened their visors at the same time and set cards in.

Final Vent

Final Vent

Red and black, the two dragon riders crouched down and gathered their strength before jumping up in unison. Up in the air, they aimed at the monster. Red and black dragon circled behind them. They opened their bearded mouths and spat the greatest flame ever. Dragon Knight and Onyx were engulfed in the flames and became bullets of red and black light, shooting straight into the monster's center. It was like opening a tunnel in sand mountain. Dragon Knight and Onyx were both propelled by flames of two dragons, enhancing

the power of the dragon rider kick four times.
This strongest combination attack of "XR" – Crimson kick. A giant hole opened up in the monster's body and it let out a sorrowful scream of fallen god. Explosion covered it and tore it from inside out. The whole body cracked and collapsed in a flash of intense light. A giant explosion followed, obliterating it completely. „And the race has its winner ...“ „Just stop...“ The riders all dropped down. „Well done. It's finally over and we won!“ Eubulon praised them. „I did it!“ „I won! I did!“
„Oh, a monster is crawling from the mirror!“ „Ha ha ha!“ Everyoned cheered and celebrated regardless of what was said. All riders detransformed ans shared their joy with handshakes and smiles. The more joyous ones added hugs. Even JTC and Drew joined in. Brian stood silently outside of the happy cirle. He held his hands out, surrendering. „Len...“ „Let's go.“ Prompted by Len, Brian walked in front of the riders. The cheering stopped and all sights fell on him. „... I'm sorry,“ Brian hung his head low. „I cooperated with Stuart without having any idea what he is actually planning and just made everything worse. I am really sorry.“ „Brian, that's enough.“
Kit punched him in shoulder lightly. „No, not good.“ „Definitely not.“ Danny grabbed Brian's shirt and tightened his grip. „You vented us. I surrendered, but I didn't lose!“ „Wait, Danny!“ Danny didn't listen to Kit and swung his fist at Brian. „...!?“ The fist has stopped just before hitting. „I would kill you if Jessica got hurt. You're lucky that she did not.“ Danny tossed Brian aside. „... Sorry“ „You wouldn't have won any otherwise.“
JTC stopped in front of Brian. „I can fix that.“ „Uh...“ Brian's face scrunched up, but JTC only stepped on his feet and walked away. „Man...“ Kit sighed. „Let's return and celebrate.“ Everyone followed Eubulon's words. Third reality's sky was dyed with smoke and light.

EPILOGUE

Stuart's case was settled. Three days passed. All earth riders had their memory wiped and returned to their previous lives one after another. They all surrendered to the procedure even though several complained about being thrown in unstable conditions... again. No Men got involved this time around to smoothen the transition and avoid creating much fuss. Richie and Brad didn't lose their jobs. JTC and Drew were out of prison. To Kit's disappoitment, Chris was also ordered to submit. Their friendship had to be lost again. Neverthless, Chris was calm and tried his best to keep Kit from confronting Phillips and Eubulon over the matter. „It's fine. I want to go back to being a Marine. I have to make up for the time I lost. Also, if I remember being a rider, there is always a probability I'll be drawn back at some point and that would ruin all my effort. I want to avoid that.“

„I understand. That is the meaning of Semper Fi.“ Kit said. „We can be friends if we meet again.“ Chris smiled and saluted Kit and Len.

No Men's HQ was bustling with life now that Ventaran riders returned. It was a different sort of life when no monster rushes occured anymore. There was no sense of urgency. Feeling that peaceful atmosfere, everything that happened seemed like a dream to Kit. But the evidence was solid and the knot hidden in Kit's chest wouldn't go away.

Mulling over his doubts, he knocked on the door of Eubulon's laboratory. „It's Kit.“ „Oh, come in.“ Eubulon greeted him. „What worries you?.“ „Um... It's Colonel Stuart.“ „And?“ „I can't imagine he did it on his own.“ „He didn't not. There is no doubt someone supported him, created his cover and worked with the technology.“ „After all, there are people on Earth who look at riders and Ventara as he did, aren't there?“ „It's going to be fine. It's a human problem. They have to decide whether they want to trust or not. That's why I took earth riders instead of ventaran riders to the battle against Stuart. He thought Ventara was united with military power. It was not. It was with people's trust. That is the most important thing in both world. Stuart wouldn't believe it anyway.“

„That's it, isn't it?“ Kit's shoulders slumped slightly. „There are people on Earth that don't want to believe, but they are a minority against those who do. The worlds can coexist in peace. You are evidence of it.“ Eubulon placed his hand on Kit's shoulder. „You embody the connection between Earth and Ventara. The friendship and respect.“ Kit could swear he looked mischievous for a moment. „You look depressed. Do you a need a hug?“ Eubulon's face rippled and regained its alien features, big black eyes set in blue skin.

„Master!“ Eubulon returned to his human form with a chuckle. Kit laughed and relaxed. Len stuck his head into the room. „Oh, here you are.“ „There goes another person of hope.“ „What that supposed to mean?“ „Nothing.“ „Alright then. So are you heading home with us today?“ „Thanks, but another time.“ „You withdrawing?“ „No, I am meeting my father for a meal and going shopping with Maya. She wants to pick me a birthday present.“

„I see.“ Eubulon patted on Kit on the shoulder and left them alone. Kit and Len left the room after him. „You can cook, Kase?“ „Somewhat. I don't have any significant skills. I can buy groceries and make omelletes.“ „Well, I guess you're going to have boiled eggs for breakfast after all.“

Their laughter echoed through the corridors.

KAMEN RIDER DRAGON KNIGHT 2 WORLDS 1 HEART
かめんらいだーどらごんないとつーわーるどわんはーつ

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